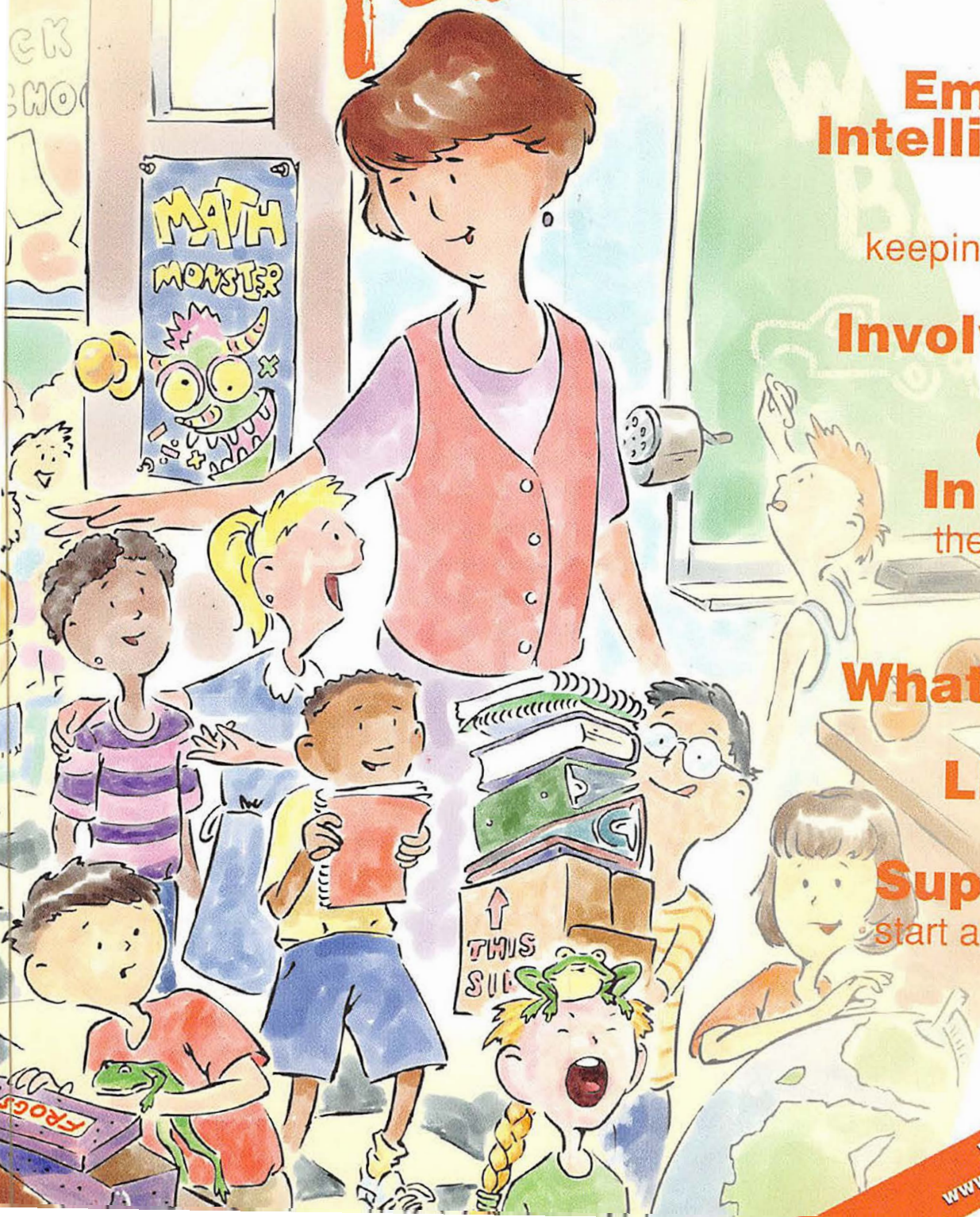
The Mailbox® Teacher

Back-To-School 1999
$5.95

Insights For Reaching Your Teaching Potential



what is **Emotional Intelligence?**

keeping current on **Parent Involvement**

Getting In Gear for the new school year

What Works with the **LD Child**

Super ways to start and end your **Days**

Visit Our Web Site
www.themailboxteacher.com

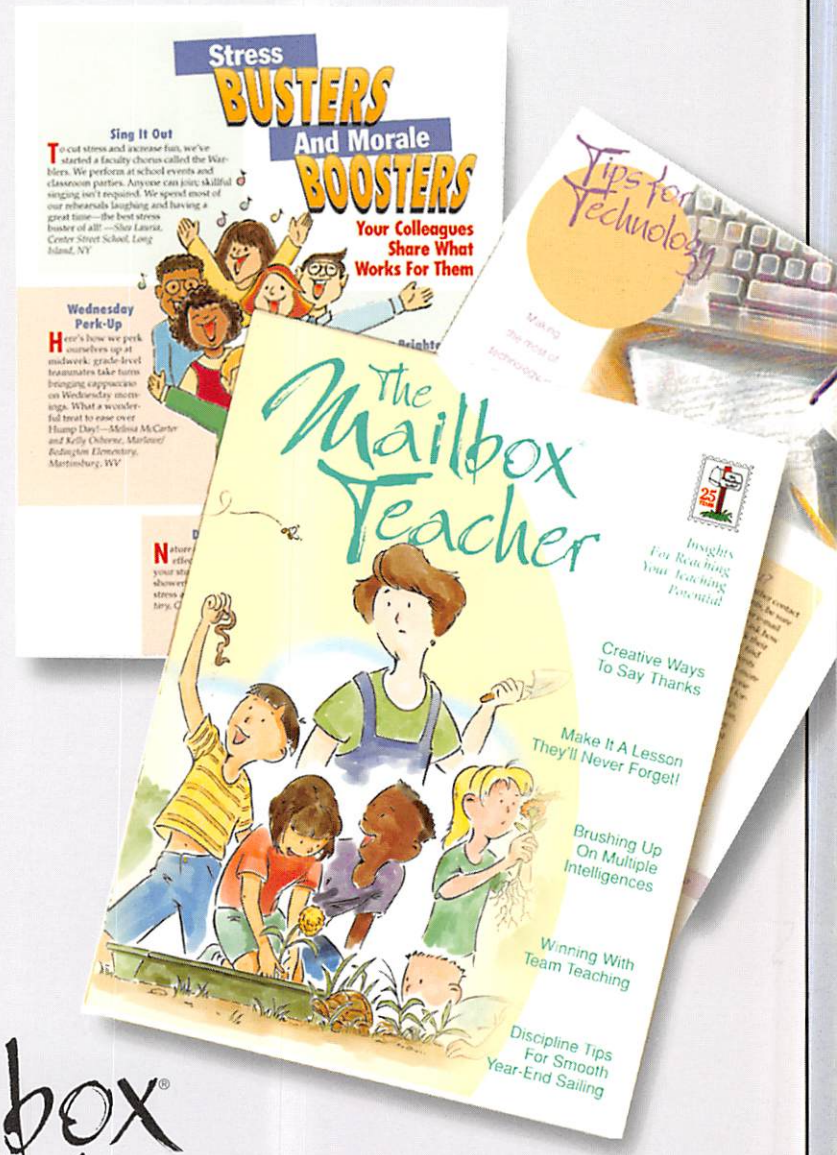
INSIGHTS FOR REACHING YOUR TEACHING POTENTIAL

The Mailbox® Teacher *contains everything you need today to be a better teacher tomorrow.*

Look beyond the curriculum to reach every student every day.

Each issue of The Mailbox® Teacher *is packed with*

- ☑ *Resourceful ways to handle everyday teaching obstacles*
- ☑ *Practical measures to take to reach children, not just teach them*
- ☑ *The scoop on current teaching trends and how to make them work for you*
- ☑ *Solutions for managing classroom time and stress*
- ☑ *Teacher-tested tips for making an impact in a child's life*
- ☑ *Inspiring glimpses into teaching's most rewarding moments*



The Mailbox® Teacher *will help you thrive in the classroom, not just survive.*

Subscribe Today!

CALL TOLL-FREE
1-800-753-1843
Mon.–Fri. 8 a.m.–11 p.m. ET

For K–6 teachers

The Mailbox® Teacher
From the editors of The Mailbox® *magazine*

A one-year subscription is only $19.95 for 4 issues.

4LAF

Visit us on the World Wide Web: www.themailboxteacher.com

All non-U.S. subscriptions, please add $6.00 postage and handling in U.S. funds. Please allow 8–10 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

The Mailbox® Teacher

Back-To-School 1999 • Volume 28—Number 1

Insights For Reaching Your Teaching Potential

Features

5 **Super Starters And Sensational Send-Offs** Try these tips for a smooth-running school day.

10 **Get Super-Organized, Super-Quick** Our readers share their hints for handling paperwork, managing materials, and more!

16 **Mapping Out A Great Year** These ready-to-use parent surveys will guide you all year long.

23 **Full Of Heart** One teacher steps back in time—and steps up to a challenge.

28 **Start Your Engines!** Our subscribers' ideas for jump-starting the new year.

34 **Emotional Intelligence** It might hold the key to teaching success.

40 **Okay, You *Really* Must Be A Teacher If...** Back by popular demand: more sure signs that you're a teacher through and through.

page 5

42 **Clara Barton? George Washington? Frederick Douglass? What Are *You* Doing Here?** Here's a class project guaranteed to delight students and parents alike.

50 **It's A Small World After All** Can-do ideas for real-life learning.

54 **Learning Disabled? Make That Learning *En*abled!** Our subscribers' tips for success with LD students.

Departments

3 **Sharing Ideas And Contributor Form** How to contribute your best ideas to *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine.

9 **Special Moments** Reminders of the real reasons we teach.

14 **Helping Hands** Tips for connecting with parents and volunteers.

24 **Keeping Current** Helping you stay up-to-date on trends in teaching. This issue: *parent and community involvement.*

32 **Reaching Children** Our subscribers' ideas for cutting down on put-downs and name-calling.

38 **Tips For Technology** Our subscribers' suggestions for making the most of the technology you have.

46 **Teacher Bulletin Board** Post your requests here!

58 **Our Readers Write** Classroom tips and timesavers.

62 **Grin & Share It** Glimpses into the lighter side of teaching.

©1999 The Education Center, Inc., P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. All rights reserved. Except as provided herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic or mechanical, without written permission from the publisher. Please direct written inquiries to the address above. Permission is granted to the original subscriber to reproduce pages for individual classroom use only and not for resale or distribution. Reproduction for an entire school or school system is prohibited. The Education Center®, *The Mailbox®*, and the mailbox/post/grass logo are registered trademarks of The Education Center, Inc. All brand or product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies. Printed in the United States of America.

Visit Our Web Site: www.themailboxteacher.com. Order Books On-Line.

The Mailbox® Teacher

Insights For Reaching Your Teaching Potential
Back-To-School 1999—Volume 28—Number 1

Publisher: The Education Center, Inc.

EDITORIAL:
Editor In Chief: Margaret Michel
Magazine Director: Karen P. Shelton
Editorial Administrative Director: Stephen Levy
Senior Editors: Karen A. Brudnak, Irving P. Crump
Copy Editors: Karen Brewer Grossman, Karen L. Huffman, Tracy Johnson, Scott Lyons, Debbie Shoffner, Gina Sutphin
Contributing Writers: Diane Coffman, Marsha Horder, Jeff Krieger, Rose Reissman, Douglas Wurst
Staff Artists: Cathy Spangler Bruce, Pam Crane, Nick Greenwood, Clevell Harris, Susan Hodnett, Sheila Krill, Theresa Lewis, Rob Mayworth, Kimberly Richard, Rebecca Saunders, Barry Slate, Donna K. Teal, Jennifer L. Tipton
Cover Artist: Nick Greenwood
Editorial Traffic Manager: Lisa K. Pitts
Type Systems Coordinator: Lynette Maxwell
Graphic Services Coordinator: Teresa Davidson
Editorial Assistants: Terrie Head, Laura Slaughter, Wendy Svartz, Karen White
Librarian: Elizabeth A. Findley
Assistant Librarian: Dorothy C. McKinney
Production Manager: Robert A. Stumpf

CIRCULATION:
Katharine P. Salovaara Brower, **Manager;** Andrew Cardman

MARKETING SERVICES:
Lori Z. Henry, **Manager;** Vickie Corbett, Jeannine Lorenz, Deb Printup

PHOTO CREDITS:
©1999 PhotoDisc® (unless otherwise credited); p. 50: Karen Coffinbargar; p. 51, Edna Maguire Elementary Web site; p. 53, Jeannie Gray

HOW TO SUBMIT IDEAS

To be considered for publication, your ideas must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you want unpublished materials to be returned, the envelope must be of sufficient size, with adequate postage. Please print or type your name, address, school, and grade level on each page of ideas and mail to: Senior Editor, **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. You will receive a $20.00 gift certificate for each idea accepted for publication. All ideas must be original (developed by you) and submitted to only one publisher at a time. If accepted for publication, your name and school will be credited as the source. All rights (copyrights or otherwise) contained in the materials accepted for publication become the property of The Education Center, Inc.

SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE—including all orders, changes of address, etc.—should be directed to **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 54293, Boulder, CO 80322-4293; or call toll-free 1-800-334-0298. When changing an address, please allow six weeks' advance notice and include the old address (use address label from latest issue) along with the new address. Rates: $5.95 per copy plus shipping/handling, $19.95 for one year, $34.95 for two years in the United States. Add $6.00 per year elsewhere for postage. Payable only in U.S. funds.

The Mailbox® Teacher (ISSN 1098-5670; USPS 956-900) magazine for kindergarten and elementary teachers is published four times a year (Spring, Back-To-School, Fall, Winter) by The Education Center, Inc., 3515 West Market Street, P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753. Periodical postage paid at Greensboro, NC, and at additional offices.
Email: mteacher@theeducationcenter.com
Internet Site: http://www.themailboxteacher.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to **The Mailbox® Teacher,** P.O. Box 54293, Boulder, CO 80328-4293.

Printed In USA

The Mailbox® Teacher

Dear Reader,

We often get press releases here at The Education Center via email. Most of them receive a quick skimming, followed by an even quicker pressing of the delete key. But one news item recently caught our attention. It described a school in which every child is being given a small, wearable "computer." These tiny computers, which students will wear like watches, will be programmed with school access codes and other important information. As we prepare to turn our calendars to welcome the year 2000, it's amazing to think of the technological marvels that have come about during recent years...and even more thrilling to imagine what may lie ahead.

Although technology will influence more and more how you teach, one fact remains the same: teachers will continue to trust and use the ideas of other teachers. And that's what our magazine is all about: We're the sharing pipeline! In this and every issue of *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine, you'll find practical tips for promoting a spirit of community in your class and school; helpful suggestions for enriching relationships with children, colleagues, and parents; ways to handle everyday teaching obstacles; plus practical solutions for managing classroom time and stress. We've also included some of the more tender moments of teaching, as well as classroom humor that's sure to make you smile! The good news is that *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine is filled with ideas written by teachers, for teachers.

Be sure to look at the topics in our request for ideas on pages 3 and 4. Then take a few minutes to jot down your favorite teacher-tested ideas and mail them to us. Plus we're always on the lookout for new topics to include in *The Mailbox® Teacher*. If you have an idea that you'd like to see us cover, please let us know.

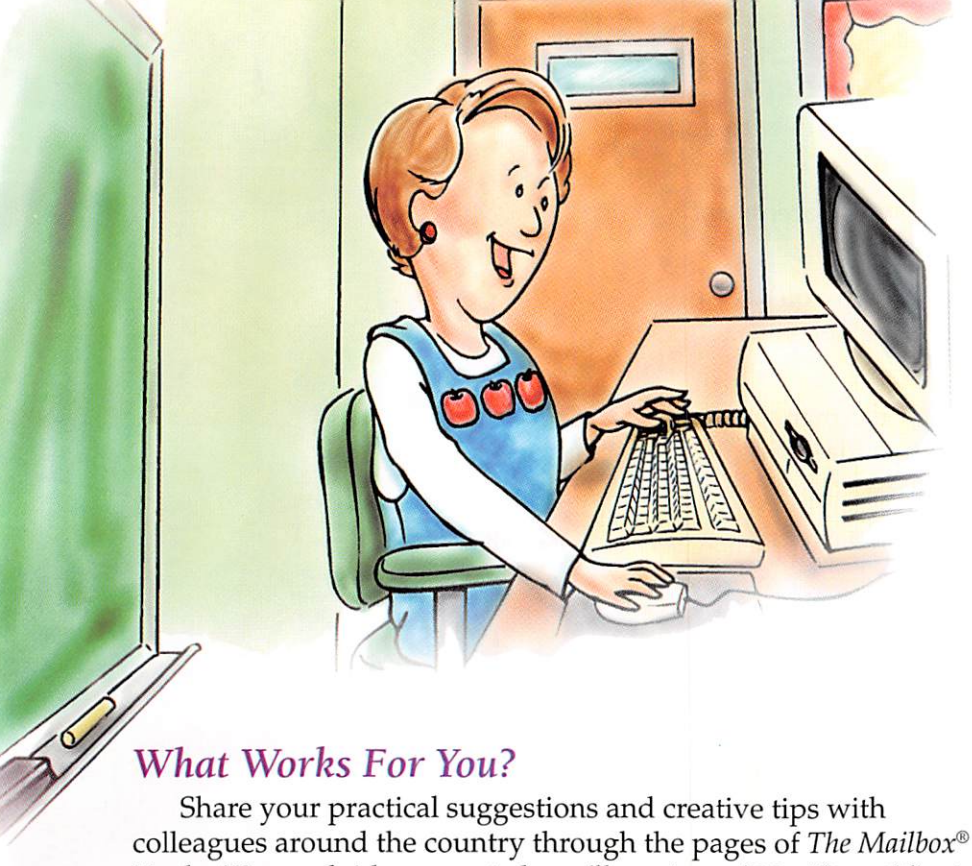
We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Irving P. Crump — Karen A. Brudnak

Irving P. Crump — Karen A. Brudnak

P.S. Remember, now you can order books mentioned in the *The Mailbox® Teacher* through our Web site. Watch for this logo!



Sharing Ideas

How to contribute your best ideas to *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine

What Works For You?

Share your practical suggestions and creative tips with colleagues around the country through the pages of *The Mailbox® Teacher*! For each idea accepted you'll receive a **$20 gift certificate** for products from The Education Center, Inc. (Call 1-800-714-7991 to request a free catalog.) When your idea is published, you'll also receive a complimentary copy of the magazine in which it appears.

Please tell us how you...

keep in touch with former students. How do you keep current with those extra special kids?

combat negativity. How do you stay positive when others are full of doom and gloom?

say just the right thing to a child. What are the special phrases and supportive comments you make to let children know they're special?

add movement. How do you make learning active? Please share general techniques, not ideas specific to a particular unit or curriculum.

use alternative assessments. What creative strategies do you use to measure students' learning? How do you encourage students to reflect on their learning? Please share general techniques, not ideas specific to a particular unit or curriculum.

give students choices. Besides allowing students to choose learning centers or pick from a menu of assignments, how else do you incorporate choice into your lessons?

incorporate music. Research shows that music may aid learning. Besides playing music in the background or using it to signal transitions, how else do you use music in your classroom?

create a cozy classroom. Share the quick and easy ways that you turn your classroom into an inviting place of learning.

hold a successful faculty get-together. What themes and menus are fun faculty favorites?

keep your creativity high. What do you do to keep your creative ideas and energy flowing?

handle discipline. What are your top tips?

continued ☛

Please share your ideas and tips for our departments:

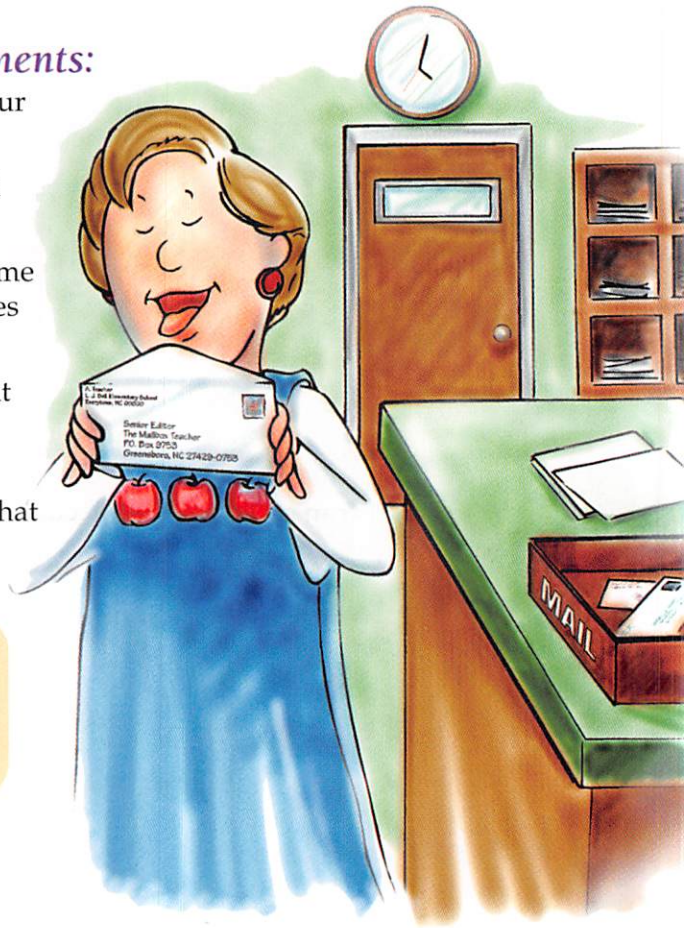
Reaching Children—How do you help the child who's new to your classroom?

Helping Hands—How do you establish rapport with parents and volunteers to get them involved in your classroom?

Tips For Technology—How does your computer help you save time and teach more creatively? What are your favorite Web sites (ones that *you* use, not ones your students use)?

Our Readers Write—Share your tried-and-true time-management tips, ideas for jazzing up your classroom, and tips for saving money.

Special Moments—In a few paragraphs, describe an experience that reminds you of why you love teaching.



Have a suggestion for a new department for *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine? How about a ***suggestion for a topic*** that you'd like to read about? If so, we'd love to hear from you! Just use the form below and drop us a note.

Photocopy the form below. Jot down your best ideas—each on a separate form. Then follow the directions in "How To Submit Ideas" on page 2.

The Mailbox® Teacher Magazine Contributor Form

Name: _____

Home Address: _____
(city) (state) (zip)

School: _____

School Address: _____
(city) (state) (zip)

Name of Idea: _____

Description of Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

Department to introduce in *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine: _____

Topics to cover in *The Mailbox® Teacher* magazine: _____

Please continue on the back of this form if necessary.

Mail to Senior Editor, *The Mailbox® Teacher*, P.O. Box 9753, Greensboro, NC 27429-0753.

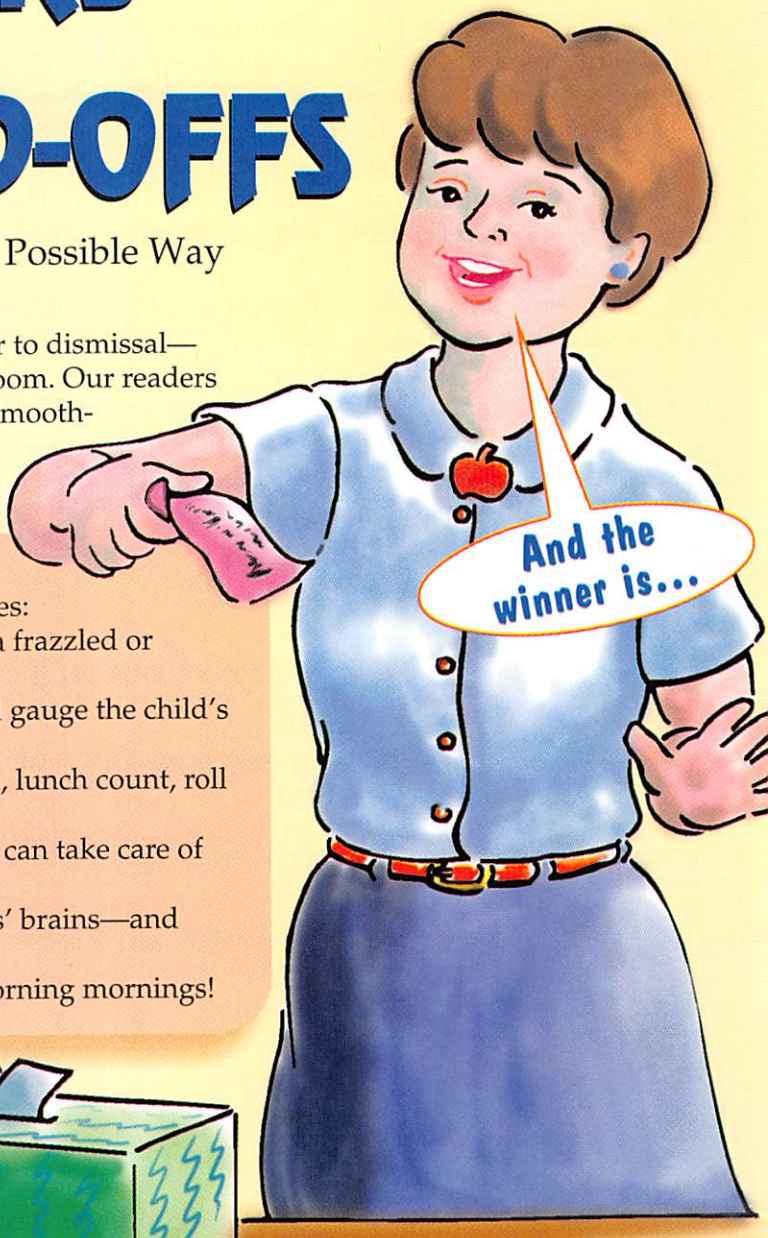
If you prefer, you can **fax** your ideas to us at 336-547-1590, Dept. TMT, or **e-mail** them to editor@themailboxteacher.com.

Super STARTERS & Sensational SEND-OFFS

Start And End The School Day In The Best Possible Way

by Diane Coffman, Walhalla, SC

First thing in the morning and the minutes just prior to dismissal—these time periods can easily become hectic in a classroom. Our readers share their tips on how to cut the chaos and establish smooth-running morning and afternoon routines.



Finding An Opening

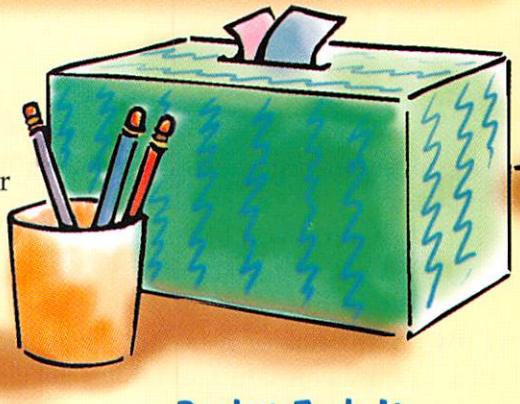
A classroom morning routine serves several purposes:

- It has a calming effect on the child who has had a frazzled or stressful morning at home.
- You get a chance to assess each child's mood and gauge the child's needs.
- You can attend to notes from parents, homework, lunch count, roll call, and other morning jobs.
- Students who arrive late know the routine. They can take care of morning tasks and quickly join the class.
- An invigorating opening can jump-start students' brains—and yours, too!

Try these super-starter suggestions for top o' the morning mornings!

Facing The Day

Provide each student with a variety of laminated faces—either drawn or cut from magazines—showing different expressions, including smiles, frowns, and fatigue. Have each student tape the face that best describes how he's feeling to the front of his desk. Explain to students that those with sad faces might need a hug; those with tired faces might need some time to themselves; and those with happy faces might be ready and eager to help another child.



Basket Task-It

Provide a basket for collecting homework every morning, even if you're planning to review the work in class later. That way students know they must have their work completed first thing and they won't be rushing to get it done during the day. Use the basket to collect notes, permission slips, and other paperwork, too.

Lotto Learning

Here's an opener that leads to an end-of-day activity. Write a question on the board about something students have just studied or will study that day. Provide blank slips of paper and a box. When students arrive or at any point during the day, invite each child to write her name and answer on a slip of paper and drop it in the box. At the end of the day, read the question to the class and draw answers from the box. Award a prize to the first student with the correct answer.

continued ☛

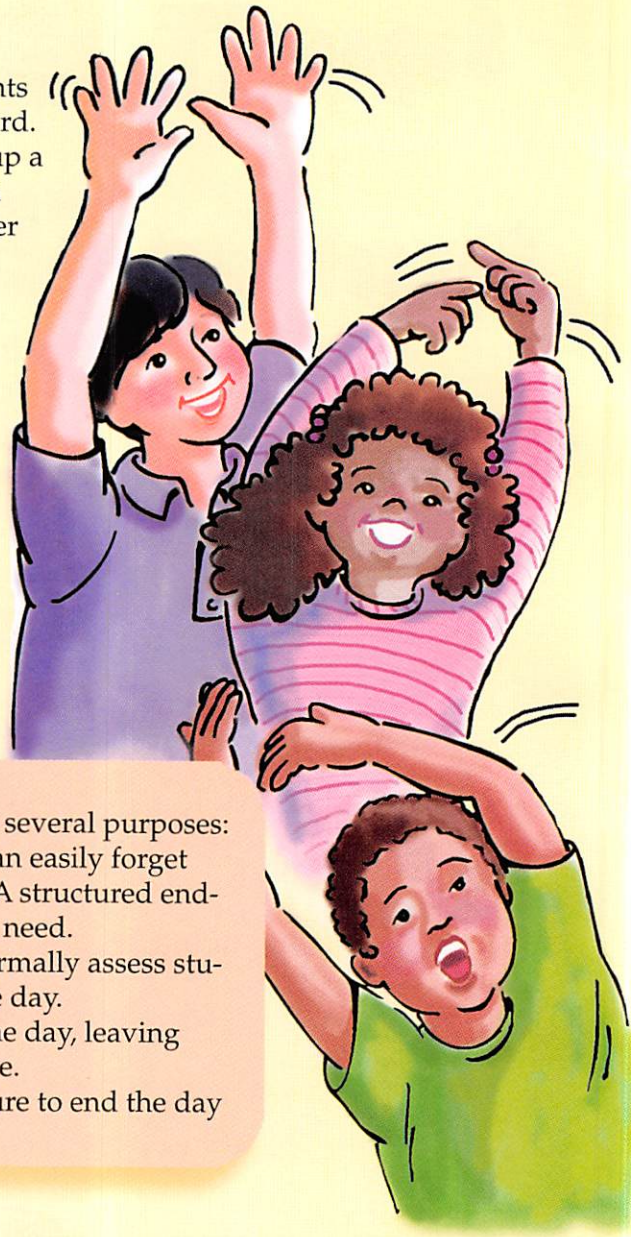
Ready For Roll Call

Add some zing to your daily roll call with this idea. Before students arrive, write a question that has multiple correct answers on the board. Explain that as students settle in each morning, they'll either think up a creative answer to the question or do some quick research to find an answer. This gives the kids a reason for quietly talking to one another and a chance to move around the room purposefully.

Wondering what kind of questions you can ask? The sky's the limit! For example, consider questions about

- current studies
- upcoming studies that will engage students' curiosity
- a silly or unusual item, such as "How could someone use this piece of dryer lint?"
- basic skills, such as "Look at the world map. Find a place that has the same name as a food."
- students' opinions

As you call out the roll, have students reply by giving their answers to the question. It's engaging for everyone!



Closing Time!

Like an opening routine, a closing routine serves several purposes:

- In their eagerness to head home, students can easily forget their books, coats, backpacks, and so forth. A structured end-of-day routine helps them gather what they need.
- A closing routine gives you a chance to informally assess students' learning and their thoughts about the day.
- A predictable ending provides closure for the day, leaving everyone feeling more energetic and positive.

Try these suggestions for sensational send-offs sure to end the day in a learning way.

All Booked?

Many students will benefit if your day-ending routine includes a review of assignments made that day, which books and materials students need, and which items they must bring to school the next day. They'll be all set!

Step-By-Step

Particularly at the beginning of the year, it's helpful to list the steps in your morning and afternoon routines. Laminate the lists and post them prominently. These will help students get accustomed to the routines.

"Class-ic" Questions

Choose several questions that you'll randomly ask students each day, such as

- "What did you learn today?"
- "What went well today?"
- "What could go better tomorrow?"

By having one or two children respond to each question you'll get an idea of how your students think the day went!

Keep It Simple

Closing routines don't have to be complicated. A simple gesture like having students respond to a question about what they learned or sharing an opinion about a particular event does the trick. Best of all, the kids can answer while you're checking their assignment sheets or writing notes to parents. As an alternative, have students line up at the door and then give their answers. While they wait in line they'll have a chance to go back to their desks to get a forgotten library book or umbrella. And you'll have a chance to speak to each child as she responds to the question and heads out the door. See you tomorrow!

More Super Starters And Sensational Send-Offs

First-Inning Stretch

My children and I start each day on the right foot—and the left one, too—by doing a morning stretch. I choose soothing music and lead them in stretching their muscles. Not only does this set the mood for a great day, but I'm also setting students up with good health habits!—*Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI*

Sunny-Side Up

My students eagerly look forward to their chance to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. To capitalize on this eagerness, every morning I randomly draw a student's name from a fishbowl to see who will be our leader. This simple gesture starts our day off with an air of excitement!—*Lynne Routzong, Western Heights Elementary, Eufaula, AL*

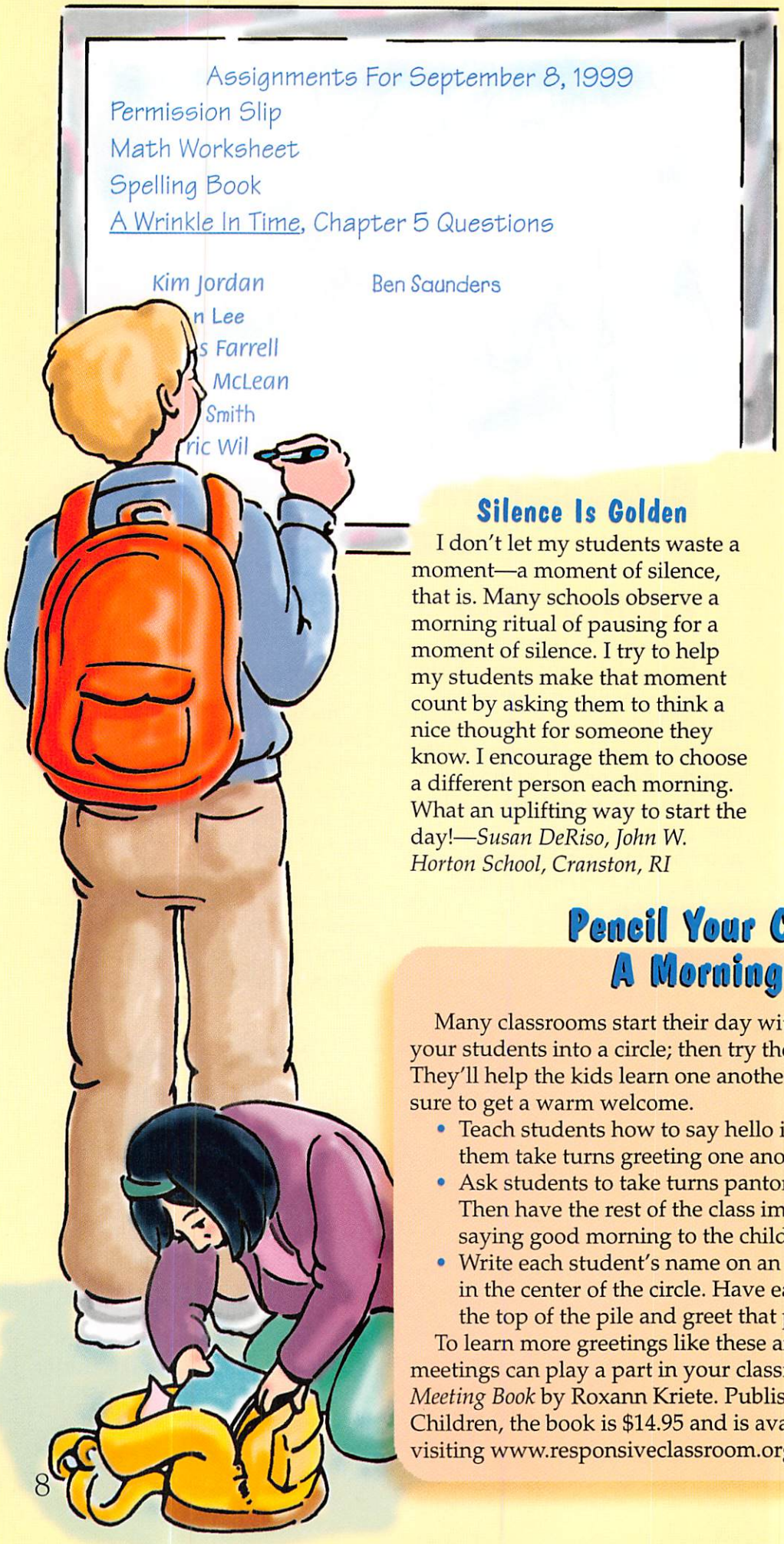
Daily Scramble

Each morning I pick a word or phrase that relates to an activity or objective for the day. Then I scramble the letters and write them on the board. As students arrive, they enjoy racing to see who can unscramble the word first. They get a fun-filled hint of what the day holds!—*VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE*

Getting A Jump On Assignments

Every morning I write on the board which assignments students will receive in each subject that day. As students arrive, they can see what the day holds and can work ahead if they choose. That way they're free to do activities of their choice later in the day, such as reading, artwork, writing, using the computer, and so forth. Everyone stays more focused! —*Gail Fleagle, Greensboro, NC*

continued ☛



Book Check

Here's how I make sure students have everything they need before leaving my classroom: I list the items on our dry-erase board. When students have put all of the items in their bookbags, they sign their names at the bottom of the board. Getting to write on the "white-board" really motivates them!—*Ashley Rebman, Cresset Christian Academy, Durham, NC*

Tutor Time

My students spend the last 15 to 20 minutes of the day in small groups practicing spelling or math facts, reading to one another, or working together on other particularly challenging skills. I also assign a few students to check their classmates' homework sheets to make sure their assignments are recorded accurately. Not only does this help with academics, but it also leads to friendships that otherwise might not have developed. —*Lynne Routzong, Western Heights Elementary, Eufaula, AL*

Silence Is Golden

I don't let my students waste a moment—a moment of silence, that is. Many schools observe a morning ritual of pausing for a moment of silence. I try to help my students make that moment count by asking them to think a nice thought for someone they know. I encourage them to choose a different person each morning. What an uplifting way to start the day!—*Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI*

Pencil Your Class In For A Morning Meeting

Many classrooms start their day with a morning meeting. Gather your students into a circle; then try the following meeting starters. They'll help the kids learn one another's names, and everyone will be sure to get a warm welcome.

- Teach students how to say hello in other languages. Then have them take turns greeting one another.
- Ask students to take turns pantomiming things they like to do. Then have the rest of the class imitate each pantomime while saying good morning to the child.
- Write each student's name on an index card; then put the cards in the center of the circle. Have each student choose a card from the top of the pile and greet that person.

To learn more greetings like these and to find out how morning meetings can play a part in your classroom, check out *The Morning Meeting Book* by Roxann Kriete. Published by Northeast Foundation For Children, the book is $14.95 and is available by calling (800) 360-6332 or visiting www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Special Moments

Reminders of the real reasons we teach

An Unexpected Boost

Usually I'm eager to start the new school year. But a few years ago I found I wasn't looking forward to it. That's because back-to-school would bring the one-year anniversary of my father's death. I couldn't seem to shake my sadness. But two days before school started, I unexpectedly received a card from Jenn, one of my fifth graders the previous year. She thanked me for getting her ready to go to middle school, and she told me how much she'd enjoyed fifth grade. Jenn's homemade card helped me start a difficult year with a smile.

—Marcia Raubenstrauch, Ridgway Elementary, Ridgway, PA

Love, Honor, And Cherish

My husband and I received many wonderful gifts on our wedding day. But the gift my students gave us outshines them all. Each child had drawn a picture of me as a bride. Then students attached photos of themselves, so I'd remember them. Several parents bound these precious pictures into a wedding scrapbook. China and crystal are nice, but *this* is a gift that we'll cherish forever!

—Sue Lewis Lein, St. Pius X School, Wauwatosa, WI

Give 'em A Little H And H

In my classroom, I used to declare every Friday H and H day—hug and handshake day. On H and H day any child could request a hug or handshake from me. At the beginning of the year some students wanted handshakes. But by the end of the year everyone was asking for hugs! One year a little girl told me that she always wanted hugs from me—because she didn't get any at home. That comment really hit me. After that, I started making *every* day an H and H day!

—Cendy Luto, Coventry School, Crystal Lake, IL

Get Super Organized Super Quick

15 Ways To Be More Organized This Year

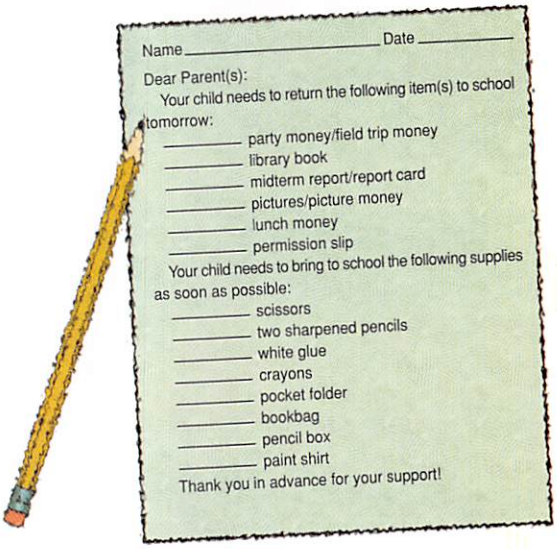
Prepping For Parents

Positively Organized

Is one of your goals for this year to send more positive news home to parents? To make this easier—and to make sure no one is left out—print a sheet of address labels for your class. You won't have to take time to look up the addresses, plus you'll see at a glance who hasn't yet received a note. Parents will be notably appreciative!—*Kris Wesson, Adna Elementary School, Adna, WA*

Lost—And Found

It's frustrating to find an important school notice on the classroom floor, with no way to identify its owner. Here's a quick and easy way to solve this problem. Assign each student a number. When you have important notices to distribute, ask a student volunteer to number them. Then have the student put the notices in the corresponding child's mailbox or desk. Lost papers will be easily reunited with their owners!—*Sue DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI*


Name _____ Date _____

Dear Parent(s):

Your child needs to return the following item(s) to school tomorrow:

_____ party money/field trip money
_____ library book
_____ midterm report/report card
_____ pictures/picture money
_____ lunch money
_____ permission slip

Your child needs to bring to school the following supplies as soon as possible:

_____ scissors
_____ two sharpened pencils
_____ white glue
_____ crayons
_____ pocket folder
_____ bookbag
_____ pencil box
_____ paint shirt

Thank you in advance for your support!

Supplies At The Ready

By making one form, you can save yourself from writing numerous notes about supplies that students need or items, such as permission slips, that must be returned. First, list school supplies that each child provides for herself, such as crayons, markers, pocket folders, scissors, a paint shirt, and so forth. Then list other items that you periodically need to remind students to bring to school, such as library books, field trip money, signed report cards, picture money, lunch money, and permission slips. Use these lists to create a "Dear Parent" check-off form so you can mark which item the child needs and when. Keep a supply of the forms on hand. What to do next? Check off "Be prepared" on your own list of things to do. You've done it!—*Virginia Croxford, South Roxann Elementary, South Roxann, IL*

Rounding Up Your Resources

Getting A Handle On Bulletin Boards

Need a place to store your oversized bulletin-board pieces? Stop by a car windshield replacement shop and ask the manager to donate some of the large, flat cardboard envelopes that replacement windows come in. You won't find a better storage system anywhere!—*Lou Whipple, Holy Cross, Kansas City, MO*

Quicker Sticker Picker

Is your desk overflowing with assorted stickers? Here's a suggestion for how to get them organized. Obtain a file box and index cards. Then decide how you would like to sort your stickers—by month, season, holiday, subject, topic, etc. Write the names of your categories on index cards; then file the stickers behind the appropriate cards. You'll never be stuck without the right sticker!—*Joyce Cummings, First Baptist Day School, O'Fallon, MO*

Baskets O' Books

With just a little help, even young students can return books to the right spot in your classroom library. Gather an assortment of colored plastic baskets, one color for each category of books in your library. Label the baskets. Next, sort your books into corresponding categories. Obtain plain stickers (round white dots work well) and put one in the top corner of each book. Mark the book's category on the sticker. For nonreaders, use colored dots that correspond to the book's basket color. Explain the system to your students. Then, as you get new books, add stickers to those too. It's a self-sorting library! —*Nicole Iacovazzi, Owego Elementary School, Owego, NY*

Space-Saving Centers

Many classrooms aren't large enough for each learning center to be set out separately. If space is at a premium in your classroom, create these space-saving centers. Put the materials needed for each center in a box or basket. When centers time comes, have each student pick a center and take the materials to her desk. There's plenty of room for all!—*Tammy Setzer, Antioch Christian, Oklahoma City, OK*

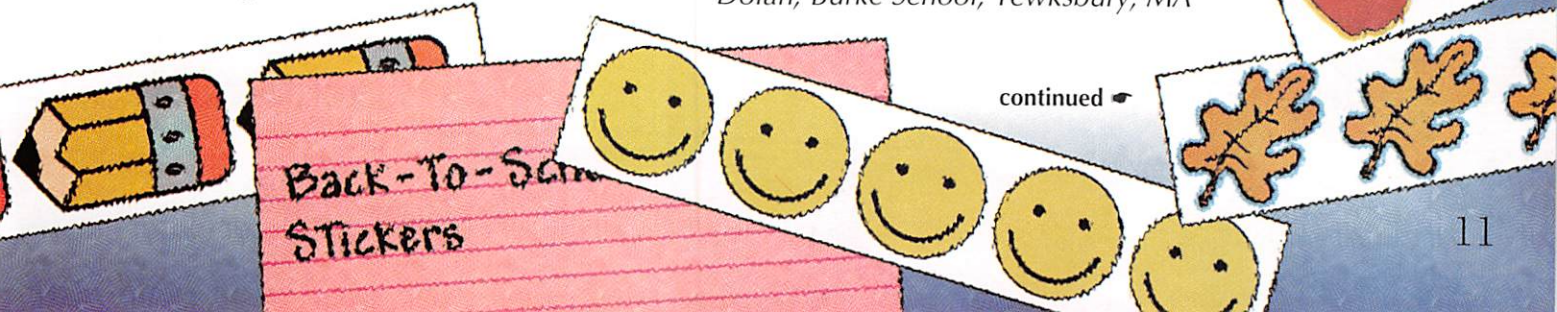
Books, Books, Everywhere!

It's frustrating to finish a unit and *then* find out that a colleague had the perfect class set of books to go with it. Here's how to get a handle on who has what: Have each teacher in your grade level type a list of book sets that she has. Also list any book sets in your stockroom or library. Merge the lists and alphabetize them. Next to each title provide a space where teachers sign out these book sets so everyone can see their current locations. Keep the list in a central spot, and update it periodically. You'll have a valuable resource that everyone will appreciate! —*Barbara Samuels, Riverview School, Rockaway, NJ*

Adventures In Color Coding

Purchase packages of computer disks in various colors. Choose one color for each subject and use only disks of that color to save materials for that subject. Quick, easy, and colorful organization!—*Amy Dolan, Burke School, Tewksbury, MA*

continued



Where Did I See That Unit About...?

How many times have you remembered a helpful article or unit but couldn't get your hands on it when you needed it? Here's a strategy for sorting and filing articles as they come your way.

1. When you receive a teacher resource magazine, tear off the cover. As you read each article, tear it out by peeling it from the magazine at the glued spine. No more ragged edges!
2. As you read articles, make two piles: one of pages to be discarded and one of articles and ideas that you're likely to use in the future. Staple multipage articles. In sections with several tips, ideas, bulletin boards, or crafts on one page, cut out only the ideas you want to save. If you want items on the front and back of a page and they're from different articles, make a note to yourself to photocopy the page so you get what you need.
3. Label a file folder for each topic that you're collecting articles for. Be specific. For example, instead of one math file, create files for geometry, fractions, measurement, and so forth. Sort the articles and ideas into the folders. Glue related short ideas onto one larger sheet of paper so they don't get misplaced.
4. As you're deciding where to file articles, ask yourself, "Where would I be most likely to look for this two years from now?" If you can't decide, put a cross-reference note in the other file.

You'll spend less time hunting through magazines and more time using the great ideas they contain!—*Jacqueline Kremer, Bozrah, CT*

Ideas Of The Month

Label an empty box for every month of the school year, and put seasonal items that you use only during that month in each. Attach a note to any item that you'd like to change for next year, such as adaptations to the directions for an art activity or a new twist on a seasonal game. No more Valentine hearts mixed in with plastic pumpkins—now that's a treat!—*Lou Whipple, Holy Cross, Kansas City, MO*

A New Angle On Organization

These triangular desk markers do more than just identify students' desks. They also provide a handy place for kids to store pencils, erasers, or scissors. To make a marker, have each student fold a 9" x 12" piece of oaktag into four rectangular sections, 9" x 3" each. Have each student write his name on one of the center sections and decorate that section. Then show the kids how to fold the bottom and top sections inward until they overlap to form a freestanding triangular shape. The decorated parts should be facing out. Staple the overlapping sections together. Explain that students will keep the markers on their desks both for identification and for storage. These triangular organizers are handy—no three ways about it!—*Alice Rice, Scottsdale, AZ*

Winning The Paperwork Shuffle

Organized For Open House

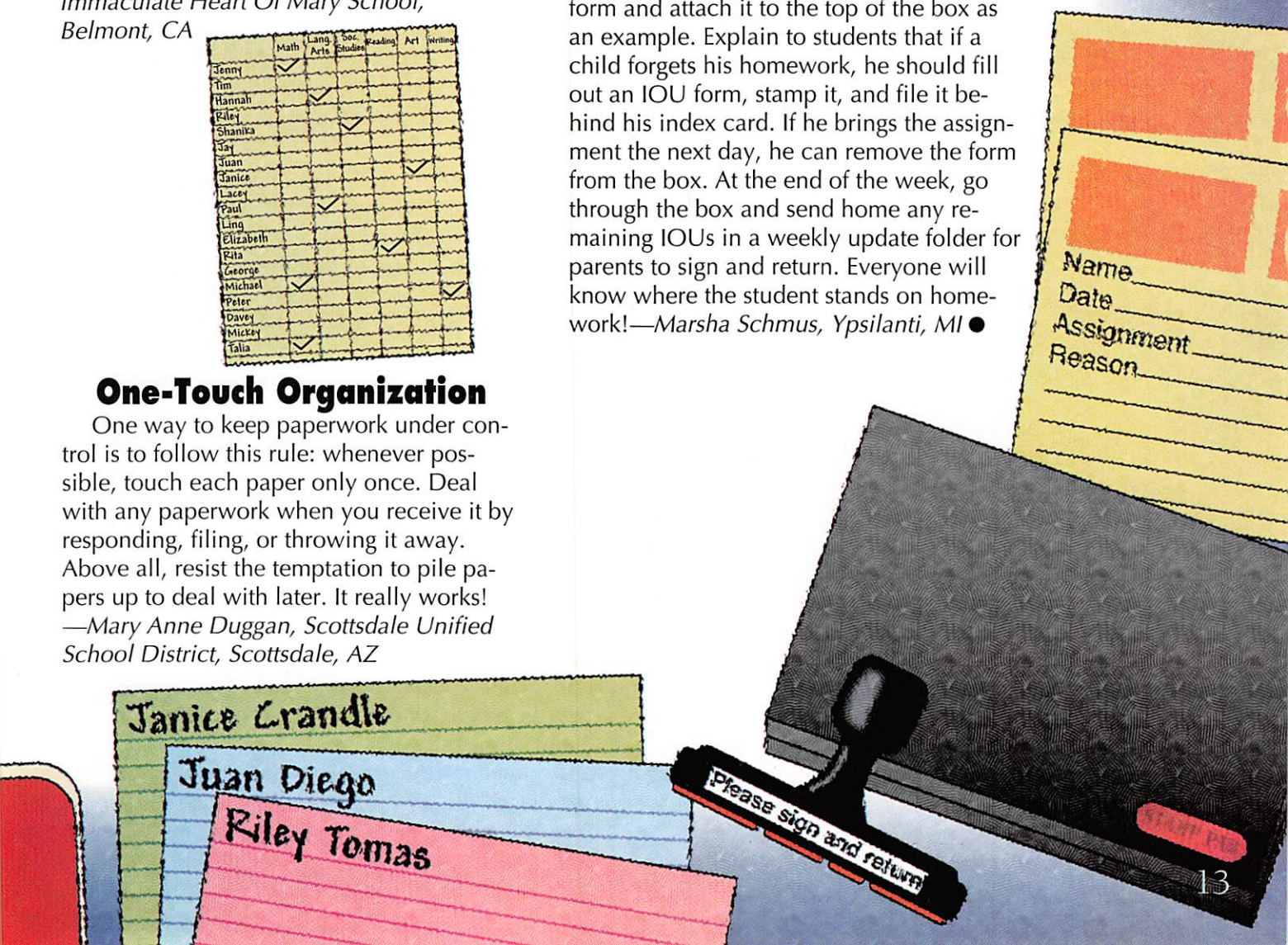
Here's an idea to eliminate that last-minute rush to gather sample papers to show to parents at Open House. At the start of the school year, make a grid with students' names down the side and the subjects you teach across the top. Starting on the first day of school, whenever you grade papers keep an eye out for ones that would be good samples. Then check off that square on your grid. File the papers alphabetically, by each student's last name. Let students know that they'll get these papers back at Open House. Then invite parents in and let the visits begin!—*Lorie Manos, Immaculate Heart Of Mary School, Belmont, CA*

One-Touch Organization

One way to keep paperwork under control is to follow this rule: whenever possible, touch each paper only once. Deal with any paperwork when you receive it by responding, filing, or throwing it away. Above all, resist the temptation to pile papers up to deal with later. It really works! —*Mary Anne Duggan, Scottsdale Unified School District, Scottsdale, AZ*

IOU ASAP

This year, put the responsibility for keeping track of late homework on your students' shoulders. Create a 3" x 5" homework IOU form, with spaces for a student to write his name, the date, the name of the assignment, and the reason he didn't complete it. Copy a supply of the form. Next write each student's name on an index card. Obtain a rubber stamp that says, "Please sign and return." Then place the index cards, forms, rubber stamp, and an ink pad in a file box. Fill out a copy of the form and attach it to the top of the box as an example. Explain to students that if a child forgets his homework, he should fill out an IOU form, stamp it, and file it behind his index card. If he brings the assignment the next day, he can remove the form from the box. At the end of the week, go through the box and send home any remaining IOUs in a weekly update folder for parents to sign and return. Everyone will know where the student stands on homework!—*Marsha Schmus, Ypsilanti, MI* ●



Helping Hands

Tips for connecting with parents & volunteers

Parent-Made, Kid-Tested

Many learning centers come with cards, manipulatives, and other pieces that you have to cut out and assemble. They're great teaching tools, but they're time-consuming to assemble. Recruit parent volunteers to do this for you at home—you'll find there's a double benefit. Here's what to do:

1. Send a note home asking for adult volunteers to assemble the centers. Include a deadline for when centers must be completed.
2. Once you have a list of volunteers, give each child whose parent volunteered a center to take home, complete with instructions on how to assemble it.
3. Include a note to the parent explaining that, if time permits, you'd like him or her to do more than just assemble the pieces. Request that once the center is ready, the adult and child read the directions for the activities and then try them out together.

Not only will you have a whole set of ready-to-go centers, but you'll also have a class full of student experts eager to teach others "their" centers' directions!

—Carol K. Monaghan, St. Matthew School, Wilmington, DE

Cards To Keep

Parents and other adults love to receive birthday cards created by children. You can make sure they receive these treasured greetings with this system:

- At the beginning of the school year, collect a list of parents' birthdays and the birthdays of other adults special to your students. Note these in your plan book.
- Create a birthday card center. Stock it with construction paper, glitter, sequins, scissors, glue, markers, and other supplies.
- On the day of a family member's birthday, allow the student to use the birthday card center during a specified time, such as silent reading time. On Fridays check your plan book for weekend birthdays and invite students to make their cards ahead of time. Finally, during the last week of school allow students to make cards for summer birthdays.

Adults and students alike will thank you for helping spread birthday cheer!

—Mary Kennedy, Royal Valley Elementary School, Hoyt, KS

Seventy-eight percent of parents with children in public school said they'd be willing

Home Run!

Want to really get to know your students and their families? Consider visiting children at home. I've found these visits well worth the time. Here's what to do:

1. Early in the school year—or even before the school year begins—inform parents that you're planning optional home visits. Explain the schedule: for example, you might do one hour visits on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays during September. Schedule one visit immediately after school and another an hour later. If you get permission, you might want to invite the child you'll be visiting during the first time slot to ride home with you on that day.
2. Stress to parents that they don't need to do anything to prepare for the visit—it is simply a chance for you to meet your student's family and friends, and to see the student in his or her own environment. Request that a parent be at home during the visits.
3. During each visit, take time to chat with the student and family. Then suggest that the student show you his or her favorite place to play, favorite place to read, or favorite books and toys. Invite the child to read you a favorite story. Bring a short game that you and the child can play together if time allows.
4. After each visit, write the child a note thanking him or her for visiting with you and mentioning what you enjoyed most. You'll find students save these notes all year long.
5. Of course, not every parent will sign up for a home visit. So be sure to take extra time to get to know the rest of your children, too. Invite them to eat lunch with you and to bring their favorite books to share.

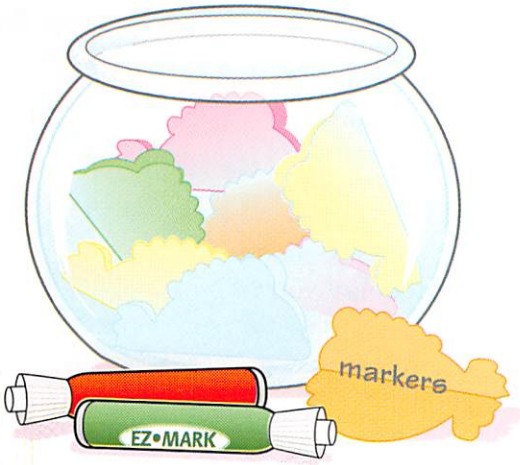
You'll find that home visits become an eagerly anticipated tradition in your class!

—Susan K. Brighton, Superior Elementary School, Superior, CO

B

Dear Lauren,

I enjoyed our visit yesterday. I'm glad to that you like books by Dahl because we'll be re The B.F.G. in October.



Something Fishy Going On...

Looking for a way to let parents know about supplies your classroom needs? There's nothing fishy about this approach! Obtain a small, clean, plastic fishbowl. Cut out a supply of paper fish shapes. On each, write an inexpensive classroom item that you need, such as paper bags, animal stickers, tissues, or markers. Fold these and put them in the bowl. At Open House and throughout the year, invite parents interested in helping to go fishing in your Wish Bowl: they'll pull out a fish shape with a classroom item listed on it and donate that item to the class. These fishy wishes work swimmingly!

—Tammy Setzer, Antioch Christian Academy, Oklahoma City, OK

to work as unpaid school volunteers.—29th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

Mapping OUT A

Parents Can Help!

by Douglas Wurst
University of Colorado Laboratory School
Greeley, CO

Would you ever consider going on a long trip without a map? Probably not. By using a map, you know where you've been and where you're headed. You're more likely to enjoy the trip and arrive without any problems.

Just as a road map can help you plan a trip, conducting a survey of parents can help you map out how you'll teach your students this year. You'll see where students have been, where they're headed, what roadblocks you might run into, and which route will suit them best. For example, you can ask parents about their children's

- previous school experiences, both positive and negative
- learning styles
- interests
- strengths and weaknesses

Having this valuable information will help you map out how best to reach every child in your class this year.

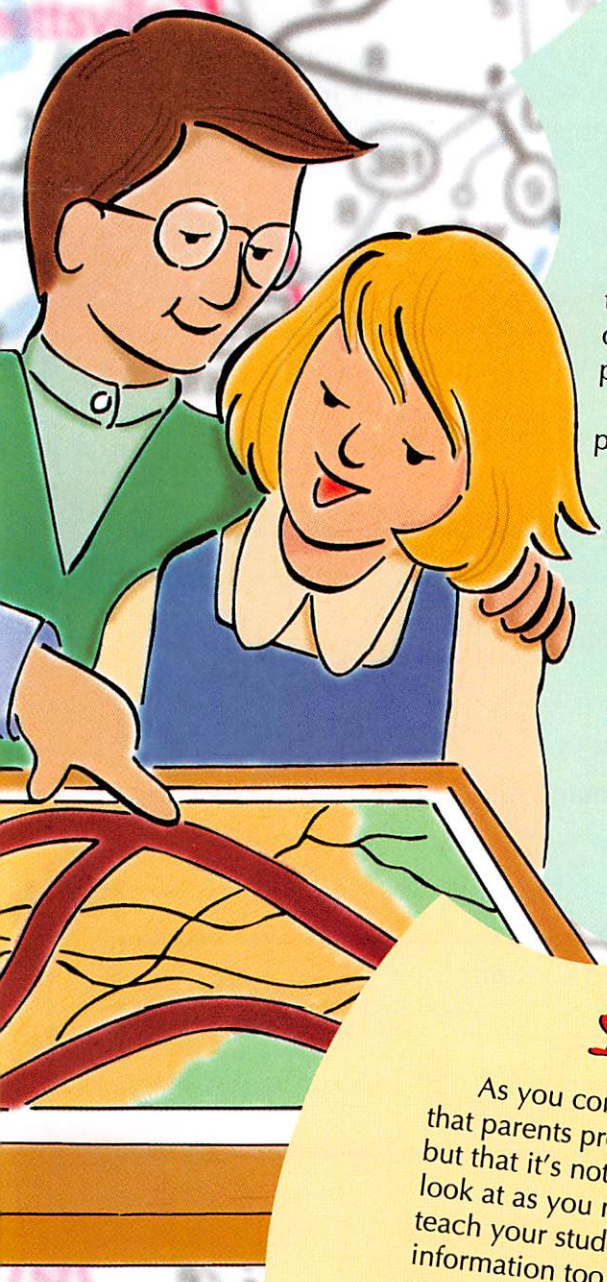
Ask. Then Ask Again.

By conducting several surveys during the school year, you'll be able to build on what parents tell you.

- A **beginning-of-the-year survey** helps you quickly develop positive working relationships with parents. They'll appreciate being asked what's important about their children and their children's education, and you'll collect information that otherwise might take you weeks or months to figure out on your own. Send this survey about a month before school starts so you'll have time to look at the replies before the first day of school.
- A **midyear survey** helps you assess how students are doing and what adjustments you might make. Send this survey in January, after the holiday bustle is over. This survey also provides a good chance to check in with parents between scheduled conferences.
- An **end-of-the-year survey** helps you gauge how much your students have learned during the year. You'll see patterns for what has worked well and what you may want to change for next year. Send this survey about two weeks before school is out.

On pages 18–22 you'll find ready-to-go surveys that you can copy and use. Or if you'd rather develop your own surveys, you can use these to get ideas for what to ask.

GREAT YEAR



Seeing What's There

To get the most out of a survey, look for patterns in what parents tell you. This can feel sort of like trying to see a three-dimensional picture in one of those Magic Eye® images—at first it all looks like random bits and pieces. But as you look more closely, patterns and pieces of the hidden picture come into focus. Without taking the time to search out these patterns, you'll run the risk of seeing only isolated bits of information and accidentally missing the big picture.

On pages 21 and 22 you'll find two forms to help you get the picture in focus:

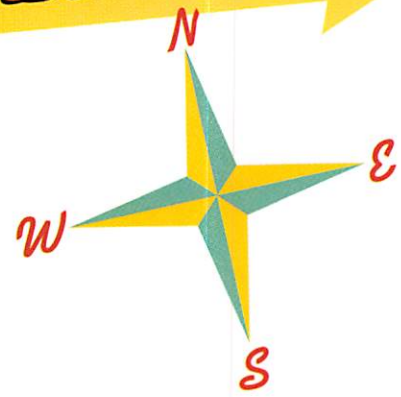
- The form **About My Class** can help you take a look at parents' overall comments and see which are mentioned most often. You'll be able to identify common concerns, the range of students' strengths and weaknesses, and other important information. Write your thoughts about what you've learned in the section of the form that reads "Based on this information, here's what I plan to do."
- The form **About One Child** can help you take a look at the comments made by one parent. Categorizing the information will help you decide how best to work with this student.

Data Galore!

As you conduct parent surveys, remember that parents provide one important viewpoint but that it's not the only factor you'll want to look at as you make decisions on how to teach your students. Include other types of information too, such as students' performance on homework and projects; interests, goals, and concerns that students share with you; and what you observe. By continuing to gather information and refine your teaching, you'll ensure that you and your students will arrive at your destination—the end of a successful school year—having learned a lot from your journey.

continued ☛

Dear Parents,



I'm looking forward to the upcoming school year! I'd like to learn as much as possible about your child before school starts so I can begin planning how to teach him or her most effectively. Please answer as many of the following questions as possible. Use the back of the page if you need more room. Then mail this form to me at the following address: _____.
To give me enough time to review your input, I'd like to receive the form before this date: _____.

I'll be sending you other forms like this one throughout the year. If you have any questions, please contact me. I look forward to working with you and your child this year!

Sincerely,

Your Child's Name _____

Your Name _____

Reading

What are your child's strengths in reading?

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's reading ability?

What kinds of books does your child enjoy reading?

How many minutes per week do you read with your child? How many minutes per week does your child spend reading independently?

Writing

What are your child's strengths in writing stories, letters, notes, and so forth?

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's writing ability?

Math

What are your child's strengths in math?

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's math skills?

General

What have you observed about how your child learns best? For example, one child might learn best by listening and another by looking at pictures. Which ways of learning appeal to your child?

What else would you like for me to know about your child?

©The Education Center, Inc. • *The Mailbox® Teacher* • Back-To-School 1999

 Note To The Teacher: Duplicate this survey and send it to each student's parents one month before school starts.

I'm enjoying the school year, and I hope your child is too! A lot of valuable learning is happening in our classroom. Please help me fine-tune my plans for the rest of the year by answering as many of the following questions as possible. Use the back of the page if you need more room. Then return this form to me at school. I'd like to receive the form before this date: _____.

If you have any questions, please contact me. As always, I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Your Child's Name _____

Your Name _____

Reading

In what ways has your child's reading improved?

What has helped your child improve his or her reading?

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's reading ability?

Writing

In what ways has your child's writing (including stories, letters, etc.) improved?

What has helped your child improve his or her writing?

What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's writing ability?

Math

In what ways have your child's math skills improved?

What has helped your child improve his or her math skills?

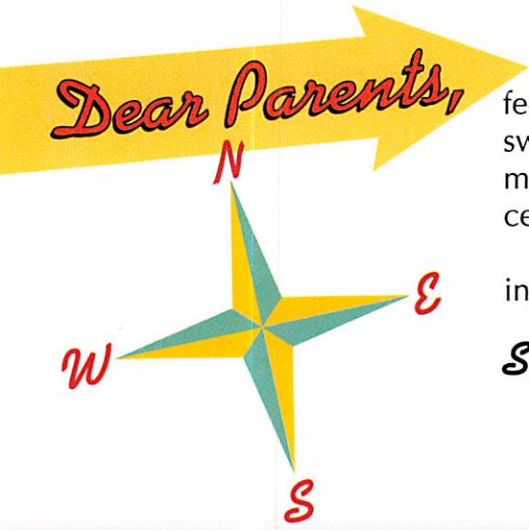
What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's math skills?

General

What else would you like for me to know about your child?

©The Education Center, Inc. • *The Mailbox® Teacher* • Back-To-School 1999

Note To The Teacher: Duplicate this survey and send it to each student's parents in January.



Our school year is ending all too quickly! I'd like to get some feedback from you about your child's progress this year. Please answer the following questions. Use the back of the page if you need more room. Then return this form to me at school. I'd like to receive the form before this date: _____.

If you have any questions, please contact me. Thanks for your input and assistance during this school year!

Sincerely,

Your Child's Name _____

Your Name _____

Reading

What was effective in helping your child improve in reading this year?

Writing

What was effective in helping your child improve in writing this year?

Math

What was effective in helping your child improve in math this year?

General

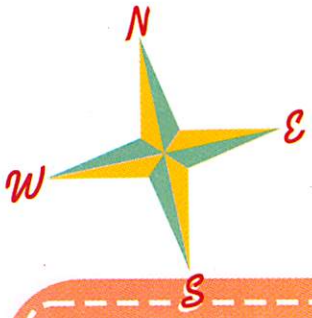
In what ways were our parent-teacher communications effective?

In what ways were our parent-teacher conferences effective?

Is there anything else you'd like for me to know about your child's school year?

©The Education Center, Inc. • *The Mailbox® Teacher* • Back-To-School 1999

Note To The Teacher: Duplicate this survey and send it to each student's parents two weeks before the end of the school year.



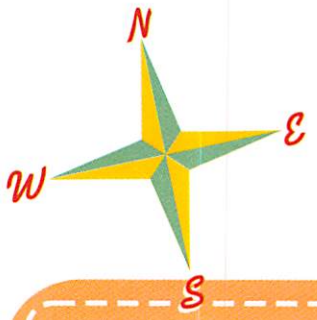
About My Class

Use this sheet to get an overview of the varied comments parents made on your survey. Look for patterns in their comments. Then write your thoughts about what you've learned in the box below.

Strengths	Number of times mentioned	Concerns	Number of times mentioned

Other

Based on this information, here's what I plan to do:



About One Child

Use this sheet to examine comments from one parent. Look for patterns in what the parent says to help you decide how to proceed with this child. Then write your thoughts and suggestions in the box at the bottom.

Student's name: _____

Strengths	Concerns
Reading	
Writing	
Math	
Learning Style	
Communications	
Other	

I think these strategies will be most effective with this child:

©The Education Center, Inc. • *The Mailbox® Teacher* • Back-To-School 1999

Full Of Heart

One Teacher Takes A Step Back In Time—And Steps Up To A Challenge

by Jeff Krieger, Davis Elementary School, New Rochelle, NY

As I walked down the hallway, frantic thoughts filled my mind. Had it really been 30 years since I'd last entered this classroom, the same one where I'd been a sixth grader?

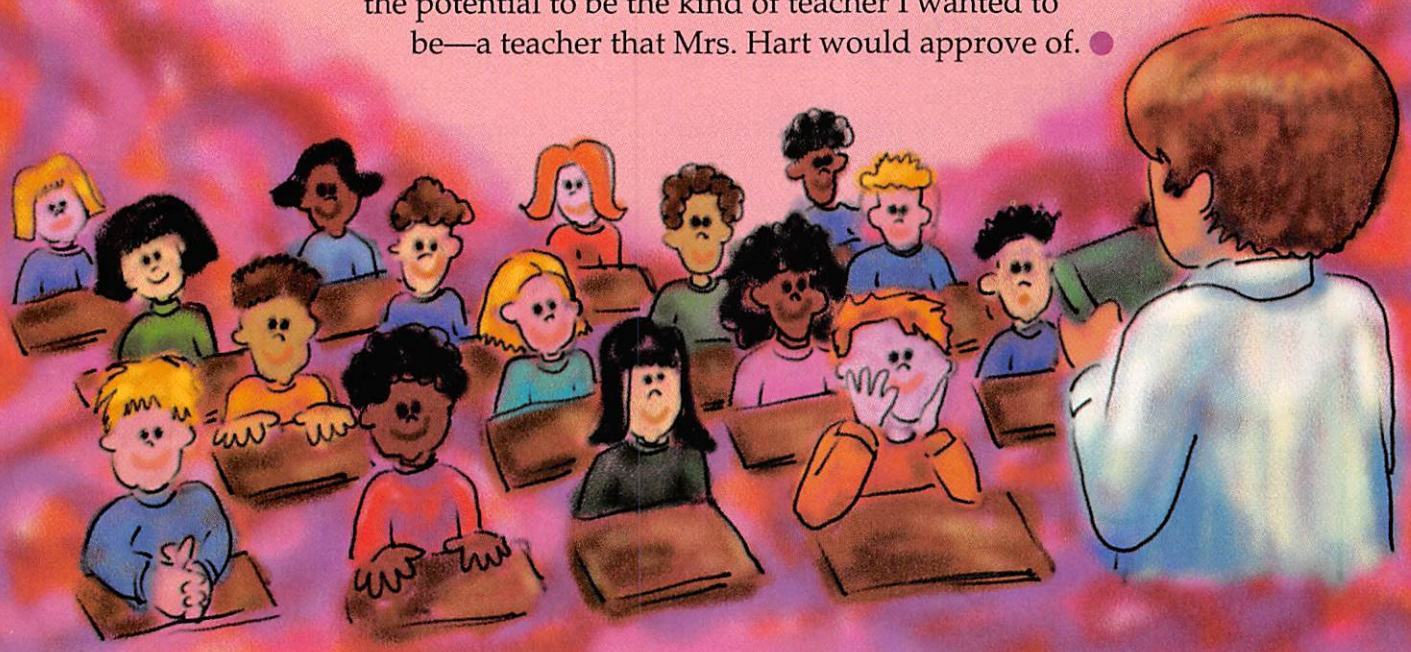
The desks, chairs, blackboards, and bookcases all seemed familiar. Something else did, too: the anxiety I felt was the same anxiety I'd experienced so many times as a student. Once again I felt like the child sitting in front of my sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Hart.

Mrs. Hart always pushed us to make sure we really understood what we were studying. She insisted we participate in class. She urged us to discuss our feelings, and she welcomed our thoughts. She encouraged us to be creative and self-motivated. She insisted on parent involvement, and she never hesitated to contact a parent about discipline. She cared about us and wanted us to reach our potential. As a child, I thought she was strict, pushy, nosy, rude, and mean. Despite her name, I was sure she didn't have a heart at all.

But as my own sixth graders strolled into the room, I realized the source of my jitters. I wasn't nervous about teaching. I was nervous that I wouldn't turn out to be like Mrs. Hart. What if I lacked her enthusiasm and dedication? What if I wasn't as patient or compassionate? What if I didn't have her creativity and her ability to motivate? I wished desperately that these familiar walls would share some of the wisdom they'd absorbed from Mrs. Hart.

I looked at my students' faces and recognized the anxiety on them. I offered a nervous smile and insisted the students tell me about themselves. I urged them to share their expectations of me and of sixth grade. I told them we were going to learn a lot together that year. Nervously they smiled back. Later, as I gave them their homework assignment, I heard one student complain, "Homework on the first day of school? Have a heart!"

"Have a heart." I took those words as a sign that I had the potential to be the kind of teacher I wanted to be—a teacher that Mrs. Hart would approve of.



Keeping Current

Helping you stay up-to-date on trends in teaching. This issue: parent and community involvement

by Karen A. Brudnak
Senior Editor, The Mailbox® Teacher

Teachers, principals, parents, administrators, and researchers all seem to agree that parent and community involvement in schools is important. But that's where the easy answers end. Schools are set up for working with children; collaboration and discussion between adults is more difficult. Read on to learn why parent and community involvement is so important, what the different types of involvement activities are, and why it can be so difficult to make parents our partners.

Why is parent and community involvement important?

One of the most comprehensive evaluations of the impact of parent and community involvement was done by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla. In *The Family Is Critical To Student Achievement,* the authors reviewed 66 studies. "The evidence is now beyond dispute," they write. "When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life."

When schools and parents work together, Henderson and Berla note these benefits for students:

- higher grades and test scores
- better attendance and more homework completed
- fewer placements in special education
- more positive attitudes and behavior
- higher graduation rates
- greater enrollment in postsecondary education

The benefits aren't one-sided. The authors noted benefits to schools, too:

- improved teacher morale
- higher ratings of teachers by parents
- more support from families
- higher student achievement
- better reputations in the community

However, you don't need research to tell you that working with parents and community members can be challenging. Some parents don't speak English. Others think their child deserves special treatment. Some business people think they have all the answers on how to "fix" schools. Others are unreliable and their interest is fleeting. But as this research shows, the benefits outweigh any of the hassles.

88 percent of parents with children in public school said that parental support

What are the different types of parent involvement?

One model that's received wide acceptance was developed by Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In fact, the National PTA recently developed standards for parent and family involvement that were based on Epstein's model. According to Epstein, the six types of involvement include:

1. **Communicating.** It's important that communication works from school to home *and* from home to school.
2. **Parenting.** Parents are a child's most important support system, and they know their child better than anyone. Teachers are excellent sources of guidance on child development. Together they can do a better job both at home and at school.
3. **Learning At Home.** Providing concrete ideas to help parents develop a home environment that encourages learning and supports teaching makes the school-home partnership strong.
4. **Volunteering.** This is one of the involvement activities you're probably most familiar with. Parents must feel welcome, feel appreciated, and feel that what they're doing makes a real difference for the children.
5. **Decision Making.** Parents shouldn't just be consulted in decisions about their children—they should be full partners in the decision-making process. Meetings, committees, and surveys are all helpful ways to get parents into the process.
6. **Collaborating With The Community.** Every community has resources to draw on, from civic clubs to cultural groups to local businesses. The more you tell families about what the community has to offer and encourage community groups to come into the schools, the stronger your school will be.

As you think about your own efforts to get parents and the community involved, consider whether you're hitting each of these six areas. Are you good at recruiting classroom volunteers but hesitant to talk to businesses? Or maybe you tend to involve parents in decisions *after* you've already made up your mind? Pick one or two new aspects of parent and community involvement, and make those your focus this school year.

Why is it difficult to get the community involved?

Parents give many reasons for not getting involved with their children's schools. In a National PTA survey, PTA members cited the following:

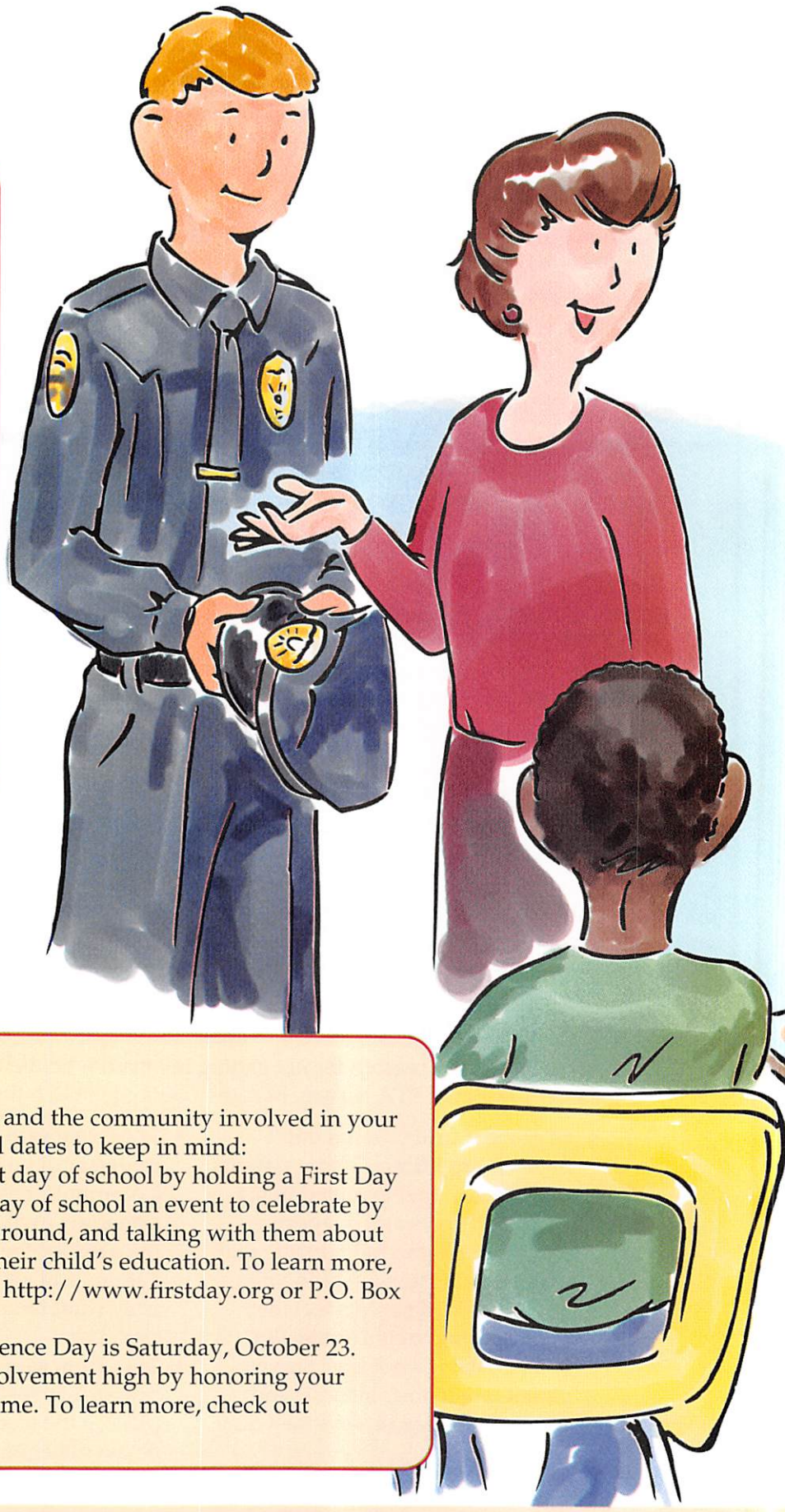
- **89 percent said parents don't have enough time.** Giving parents the chance to get involved in big and small ways and suggesting ways parents can help during and after school hours are both vital.
- **32 percent said parents feel they have nothing to contribute.** But you know that's not true! Survey parents about their interests and talents, and suggest ways they can contribute.
- **32 percent said parents don't understand how to get involved.** Communication is the key. Keep extending invitations and explaining the need for families to be involved. Parents will get the message that you truly want them to play a part in your classroom.
- **25 percent said parents feel intimidated.** School may feel like the most natural place in the world to you, but it can easily be overwhelming to a parent.

continued ☛

Keeping Current

What part does technology play?

Technology can be a big help in keeping parents up to date about their child's education. For example, Kevin Johnson, a teacher at Surprise Lake Middle School, decided to use the Internet to provide parents a way to check their child's grades at any time. Johnson developed a software program called GradeChecker, which provides a confidential instant report card to parents via the Internet. Each student gets an ID number; the site is then updated from teachers' electronic grade-book programs. Parents can click on a teacher's name to send questions or concerns via email. To see how it works, check out www.gradechecker.com.



What's the next step?

Start planning how you'll get families and the community involved in your classroom this year. Here are two special dates to keep in mind:

- Set a tone of cooperation on the first day of school by holding a First Day Of School Holiday. Make the first day of school an event to celebrate by inviting parents in, showing them around, and talking with them about the benefits of getting involved in their child's education. To learn more, contact the First Day Foundation at http://www.firstday.org or P.O. Box 10, Bennington, VT 05201-0010.
- Mark your calendar: Make A Difference Day is Saturday, October 23. Keep the enthusiasm for school involvement high by honoring your classroom volunteers around that time. To learn more, check out www.usaweekend.com.

How can I learn more about working with parents?

In one survey, nearly half of teachers said college classes weren't effective in preparing them to work with parents. So on-the-job training seems to be the only answer. These resources are sure to be helpful:

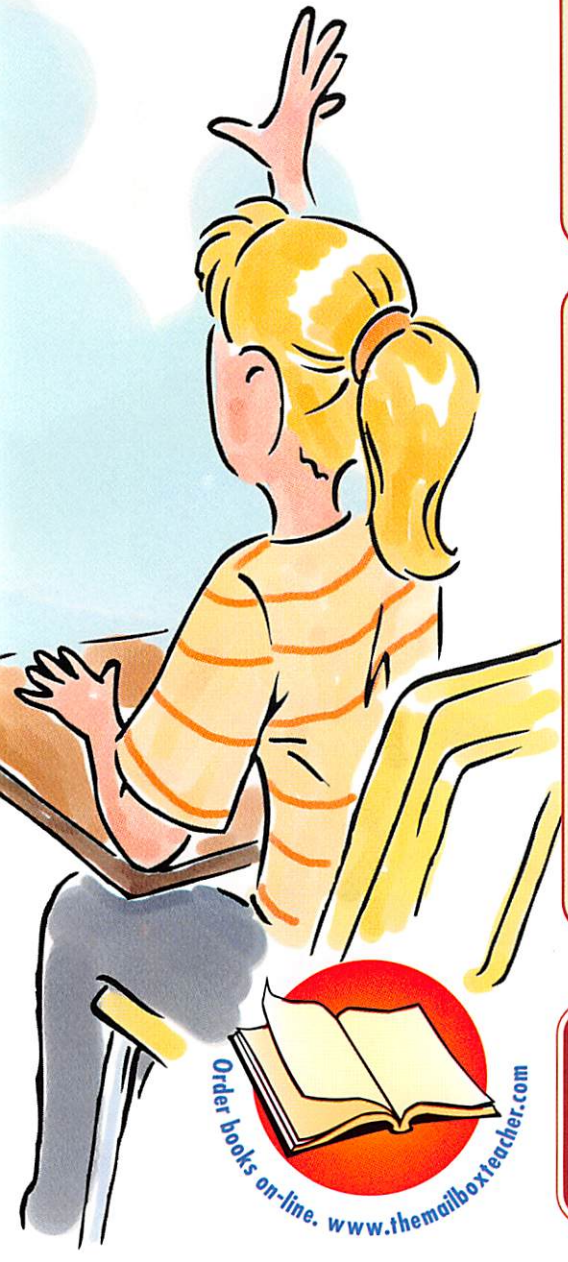
Books

- *Powerful Parent Letters For K–3,* by one of *The Mailbox® Teacher*'s regular contributors, Mary Anne Duggan. Includes well-worded, ready-to-reproduce letters. A CD-ROM version, called *Notes Home,* also is available. Corwin Press, Inc.; (805) 499-9774 or www.corwinpress.com.
- *The Parent Difference,* by Kathy Barclay and Elizabeth Boone. Provides practical ideas for parent involvement of all types, including open house, home visits, conferences, volunteer programs, and more. IRI/SkyLight Training And Publishing, Inc.; (800) 348-4474 or http://www.iriskylight.com.
- *The Family Is Critical To Student Achievement,* by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla. Includes the researchers' conclusions about the 66 studies they examined. Center For Law And Education, (202) 986-3000 or www.cleweb.org. Click on "School Improvement Catalog."

Web Sites

- The National PTA, www.pta.org. Includes information about the PTA standards and helpful checklists you can use to see how you're doing.
- The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, www.ncpie.org. Check out the guidelines for family/school partnerships.
- National Parent Information Network, http://npin.org. Includes articles and reports, a parenting discussion list, and more.
- Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm. Get more info on Epstein's six types of parent involvement, learn about the National Network of Partnership Schools, and check out summaries of successful involvement efforts nationwide.
- Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, http://pfie.ed.gov. Find out successful strategies, tips for building partnerships, and how to join the PFIE network.

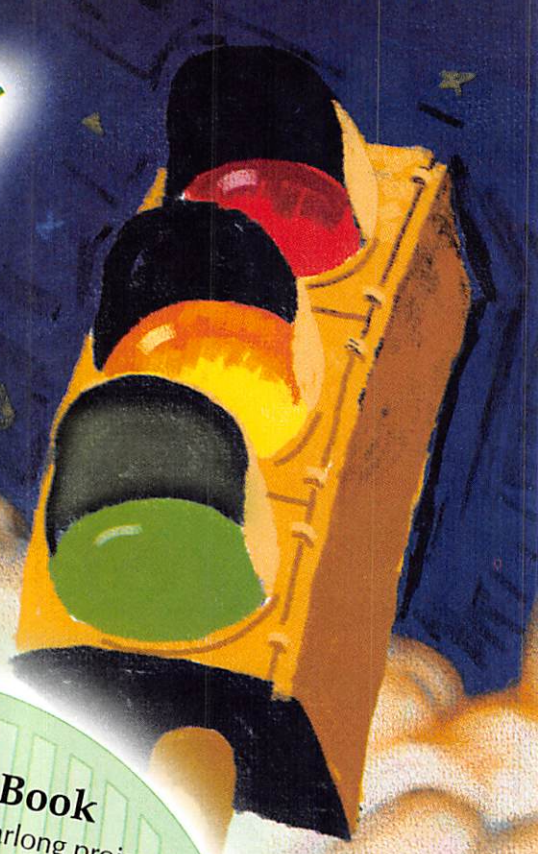
(All Web addresses verified as of March 1999.)



Special thanks to the following teachers for their help with this article:
Mary Anne Duggan, Scottsdale Unified School District, Scottsdale, AZ
Kim Minafo, Tooker Avenue Elementary, West Babylon, NY
Susan DeRiso, J. W. Horton School, Cranston, RI
VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE ●

Start Your Engines!

Our Subscribers' Ideas For Beginning A New Year



Nifty Desk Arrangement

Prepare to meet and greet your new batch of students with this nifty desk arrangement. Organize your students' desks, as well as your own, in a large circle or square. Have each child make a nametag and attach it to the front of his desk. With everyone facing each other and names visible, you and your students will get to know each other in no time! —Julia Alarie, Essex Middle School, Essex, VT

Good Year Book

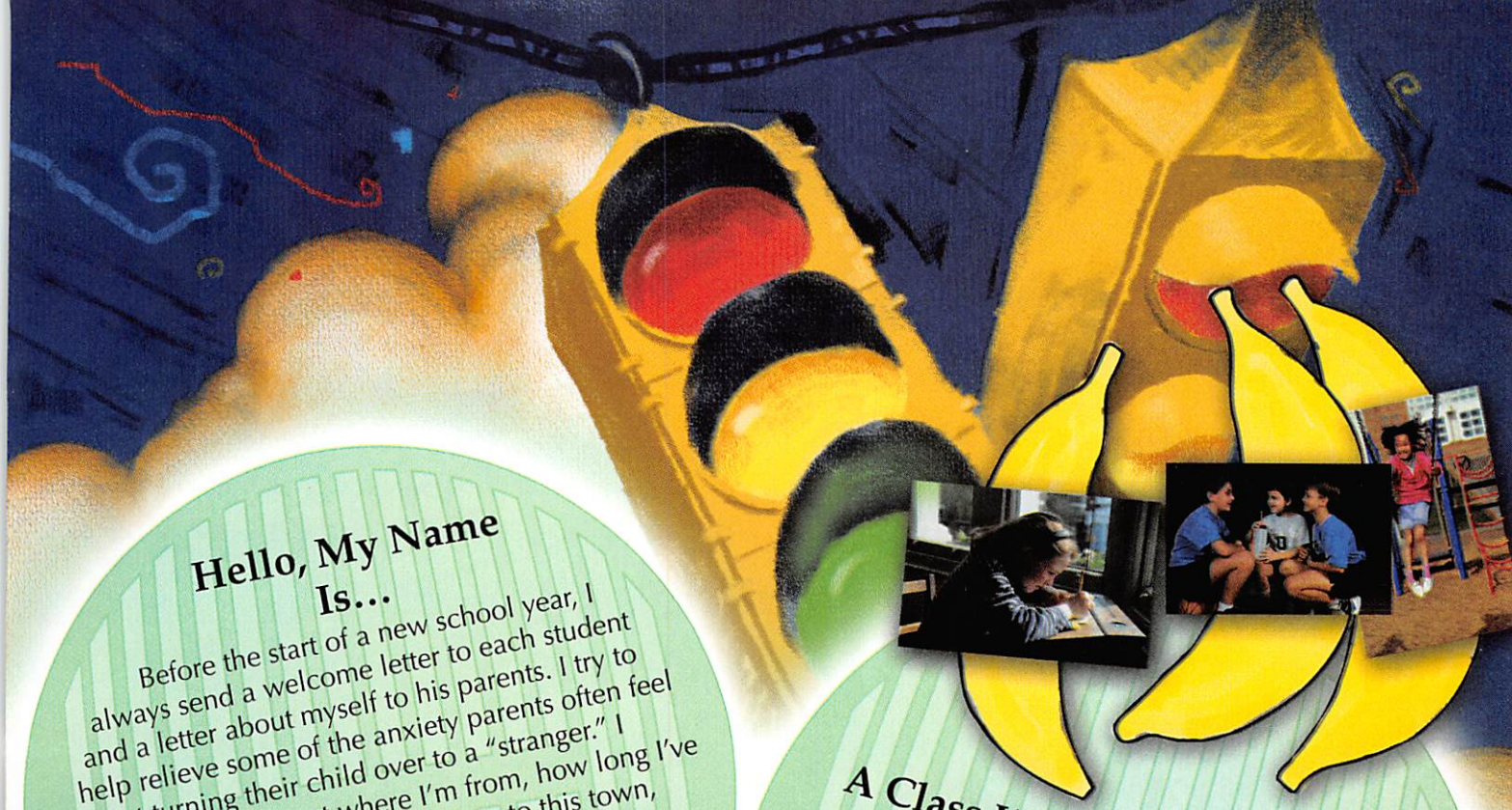
Begin this special yearlong project on the first day of school. Have students record on a classroom calendar special events that happen in the classroom and in their personal lives. At the end of each month, tear off the calendar page and save it. At the end of the year, bring out all of the calendar pages and review the events with students. Then assign each student one event to illustrate. Compile all of the completed pictures into a booklet and title it "The Good Year Book." Students will love browsing through this book and reminiscing about the good year they had!—*Cathy Ogg, Happy Valley Elementary, Johnson City, TN*

Family School Memories

When you mail your beginning-of-the-year letters, inform each student that both he and his family have a homework assignment due the first week of school! Create a "Certificate Of School Memories" like the one shown and ask each family member to help complete it by writing or sketching a special school memory. This activity gets the whole family involved right from the first day of school. Display the completed certificates on a bulletin board for Open House. Although it's an optional activity, you'll be surprised by the response!—*Ritsa Tassopoulos, Oakdale Elementary, Cincinnati, OH*

Neat-O Nameplates

Use the front halves of empty audiocassette holders as student nameplates. These cases stand on their own, and the artwork that students display inside them lasts longer since it's protected by the plastic.—*VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary School, Omaha, NE*



Hello, My Name Is...

Before the start of a new school year, I always send a welcome letter to each student and a letter about myself to his parents. I try to help relieve some of the anxiety parents often feel about turning their child over to a "stranger." I include details about where I'm from, how long I've lived where I do, what brought me to this town, how many years I've taught, my family, my pets, and my hobbies. I close the letter with an open invitation to parents to come visit the classroom at any time, and to call when they have questions or concerns.—*Sarah Mertz, Owenton, KY*

A Class With Lots Of "Ap-peel"

What child doesn't love to have his picture taken? On the first day of school, take a candid photo of each student as he works at his desk, eats lunch, or chats with a friend. Get the film developed right after school. Then, the next day, have each child cut a banana shape from yellow construction paper and attach his photo to the shape. Display the bananas on your door with the title "What A Great Bunch Of Students!"—*Martha Kelly, Bent Mountain Elementary, Roanoke, VA*

Apple Magnets

I present these fridge magnets to my students' parents during Open House. To make the magnets, I paint wooden apple shapes and attach a miniclothespin to the front of each one. Next I write my school phone number, my voice mail number, and my home phone number on each shape, then attach a magnet to its back. What a great way for parents to display important notices—and to remind them to stay in touch!—*Beverley Price, Pinar Elementary, Orlando, FL*

Let's Go On A Goose Hunt

On the first day of school before the children arrive, I place clues for a Goose Hunt around our school. I tell students that the clues were left by a "mysterious source." Each clue leads the children to various areas of the school, such as the cafeteria and the main office. The final clue leads them to a stuffed animal that offers them cookies. This stuffed animal is our reading mascot for the year and goes home with a different child each day. The Goose Hunt helps my students get to know the campus while having fun with each other.—*Mary Anne Duggan, Scottsdale Unified School District, Scottsdale, AZ*

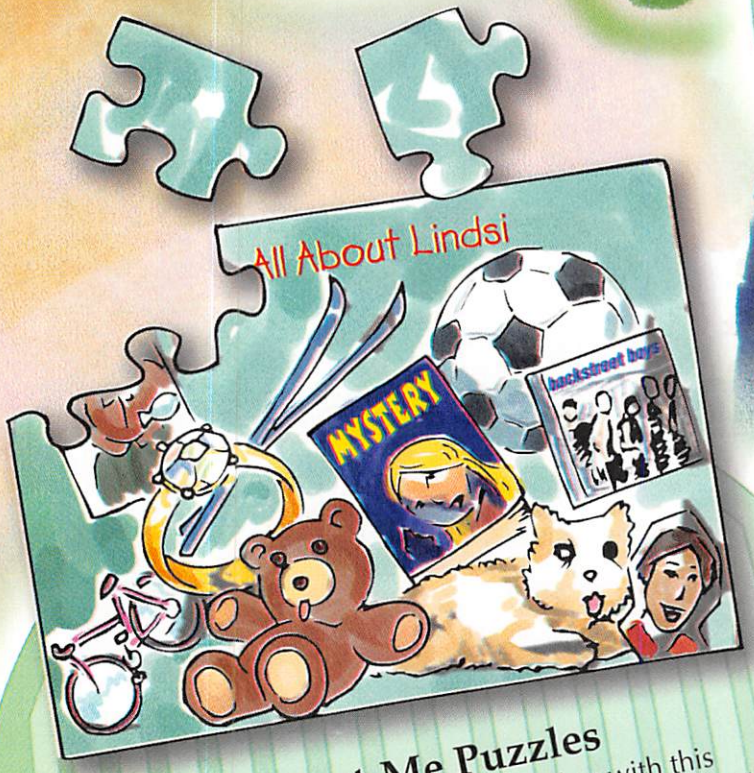
continued

Getting To Know You

Here's a fun way for students to learn about each other and test their memories at the same time. Have students sit in a circle. Choose a category, such as favorite dessert, sport, color, etc. Ask a student to name her favorite item for the category. The next student must then repeat what the first student said, plus add his own favorite item. The third student must then repeat the first two students' responses and add her own. Continue around the circle, challenging students not to slip up. They'll be surprised at what they learn—and remember—about each other.—*Irene Taylor, Fort Ann, NY*

Capture The Memories

So much happens during the school year that it's easy for students to forget some of their experiences. To help them remember, take lots and lots of pictures of both big and small events. Arrange these photos in a timeline of the year, and display it in the classroom. At the end of the year, have each student select a picture to remind her of her favorite memory of the year.—*Julia Alarie, Essex Middle School, Essex, VT*



All-About-Me Puzzles

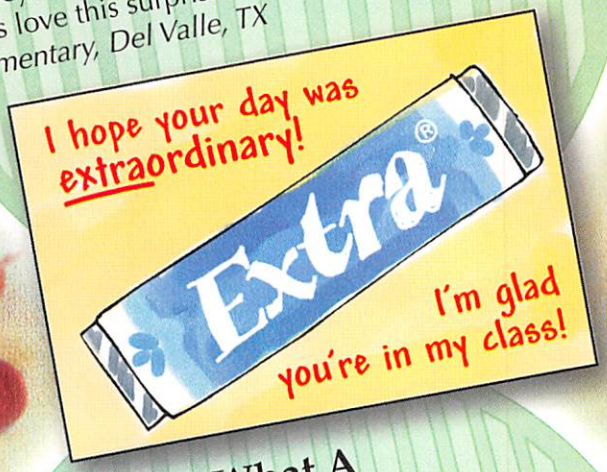
Help your students get to know each other with this first-week art activity. Provide each student with a 12" x 18" sheet of construction paper and a large envelope. Direct each student to title her sheet using her name, such as "All About Lindsi," then write the same title on her envelope. Next instruct each student to create a colorful poster that depicts her favorite things, such as sports, hobbies, TV shows, pets, etc. Have each student cut her completed poster into jigsaw puzzle pieces and store the pieces inside her envelope. Next have each student exchange envelopes with a classmate and put her partner's puzzle back together.—*Irene Taylor, Fort Ann, NY*

Wall Of Fame

Before the first day of school, make a poster about yourself that includes objects relating to you and your family: pictures, hobbies, favorite places you've visited, etc. After sharing your poster with your students, invite them to ask you questions. Next give each student a sheet of poster board. For homework, direct students to decorate similar posters with items about themselves. Have students bring their finished posters to school to share with their classmates. Then display all of the posters in the hallway for Open House under a banner that reads "Our Wall Of Fame."—*Nicole Iacovazzi, Owego Elementary School, Vestal, NY*

Extraspecial First-Day Treat

Looking for an inexpensive treat to make your students' first day back in school really special? On small, brightly colored index cards, write "I hope your day was extraordinary! I'm glad you're in my class!" Then attach a piece of Wrigley's Extra® sugarfree gum to each card. Students love this surprise!—*M. J. Owen, Baty Elementary, Del Valle, TX*



Pictures Of Parents

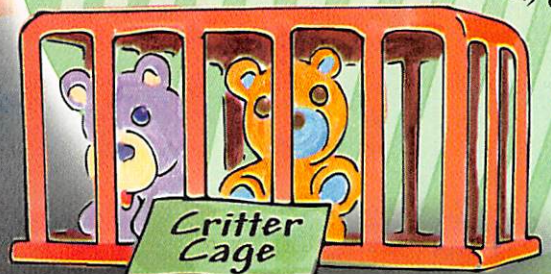
The day after Open House, my young students are in awe that their parents were actually in the classroom and sitting at their desks the night before. To prove it, I take instant photos to convince my students that their moms and dads were really there! It's fun to leave the photo on a child's desk and see his reaction the next morning.—*Ann Marie Stephens, G. C. Round Elementary, Manassas, VA*

What A Masterpiece!

Before the first day of school, I cover all of my classroom tables with white butcher paper. When the students arrive on the first day, I invite them to color "on the tables." The children love this activity, and it serves as a distraction while moms and dads slip out of the room. I keep the paper on the tables the first week and encourage students to add to their masterpieces each day. At the end of the week, I cut apart the paper and send home a piece with each child as a keepsake from her first week of school. —*Mary Anne Duggan, Scottsdale Unified School District, Scottsdale, AZ*

Welcome To Critter Zoo!

Help your students feel comfortable in your classroom by setting up a Critter Zoo! Explain to students on the first day of school that they each may bring one favorite stuffed animal to class. This animal will be kept in the Critter Zoo and will be a reading buddy during quiet reading time. Then, in a special nook, add some crates to resemble cages in a zoo. As students bring their stuffed animals to school, place the animals inside the crates. Encourage students to read to their buddies during special reading times, and explain that they may each keep a critter in the zoo at all times.—*Nicole Iacovazzi, Owego Elementary School, Vestal, NY*



Reaching Children

Ideas for cutting down on name-calling and put-downs

If You Don't Have Something Nice To Say...

Here's a great way to help your students learn to see the good in their classmates. Obtain a photo or self-portrait of each child and attach it to the top of a blank sheet of paper. Put the pages in a binder in random order. Invite three students to write something they like about the child whose picture is first in the binder; then have the child pictured write something she likes about herself. Move that page to the back of the binder so a different picture is first. Repeat the activity until each picture has multiple comments and each student has had several chances to participate. (You may want to do this over several days.) Then, whenever name-calling breaks out and children can't seem to find anything nice to say to one another, encourage them to check out the book to get some ideas!

—Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI

Put-Down Parties

When a student isn't paying attention or applying herself, it's tempting to jokingly say something like "Come on, Sarah, you should know this." But that's a form of a put-down, and though lighthearted, it sends the message to your students that putting one another down is okay. Put an end to unintentional put-downs and start off your year by explaining the Put-Down Party. Tell students that you'd like them to help you monitor what you say to make sure you never put a student down. If they catch you, award the class one letter in the word *party*. However, if you catch a student putting someone down, take that letter back from the class. If the class gets all of the letters, explain that they'll have a class party. During the party, do an activity like the one described in "If You Don't Have Something Nice To Say...." This is a great way to keep everyone—including you—tuned in to put-downs.

—Rick Crosslin, Chapel Glen Elementary School, Indianapolis, IN

Think about how hard it is to change yourself. Then you will understand

News Flash

Combine current events with teaching students about appropriate speech. Collect numerous newspapers and magazines. Ask your students to scan these sources to find examples of people praising one another. Discuss what they said and how their words may have made the other person feel. Based on these, create a list of ways students can praise one another. Finally, post the class's list and the articles on a bulletin board titled "Kind Words Make The News!" Continue adding news flashes about additional good deeds and kind words throughout the year.

Views On How To Defuse

You can deal with both the teaser and the child who is teased when these events occur in your classroom. But sometimes you have less control, such as if the teasing occurs after school, on the bus, or at home. In these cases, you might need to teach the child who is being teased how to react—or how not to react. Here's some advice from Robert Kayton, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Bethesda, Maryland:

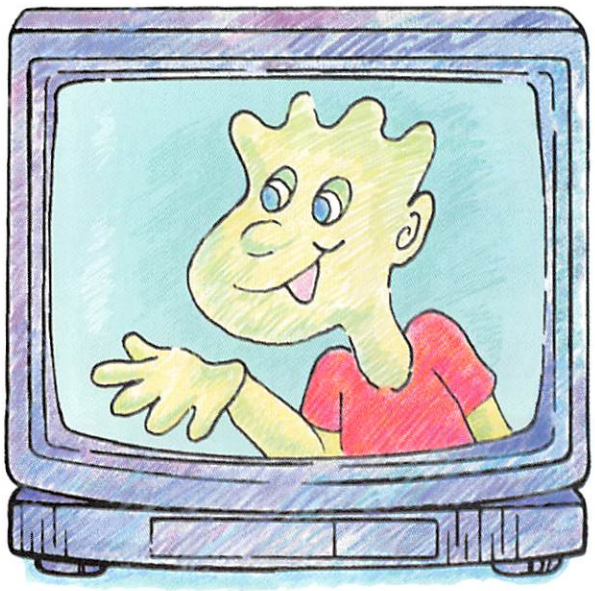
- **Ignore the teasing.** Tell the child that ignoring what's said isn't cowardly; it takes courage not to acknowledge the teaser's statements.
- **Walk away.** Learning to say, "I have more important things to do than to listen to this," and then walking away can be a powerful deterrent.
- **Be a broken record.** If the child can't ignore the teasing, suggest he keep repeating the same phrase until the teaser gets bored. For example, the child might calmly repeat, "That's not true."
- **Don't react—distract!** Suggest the child point out something that's occurring nearby, by saying something such as, "Hey, look! Joey just hit a home run! Isn't he a great baseball player?"
- **Laugh it off.** Encourage the child to playfully join in on the joking.

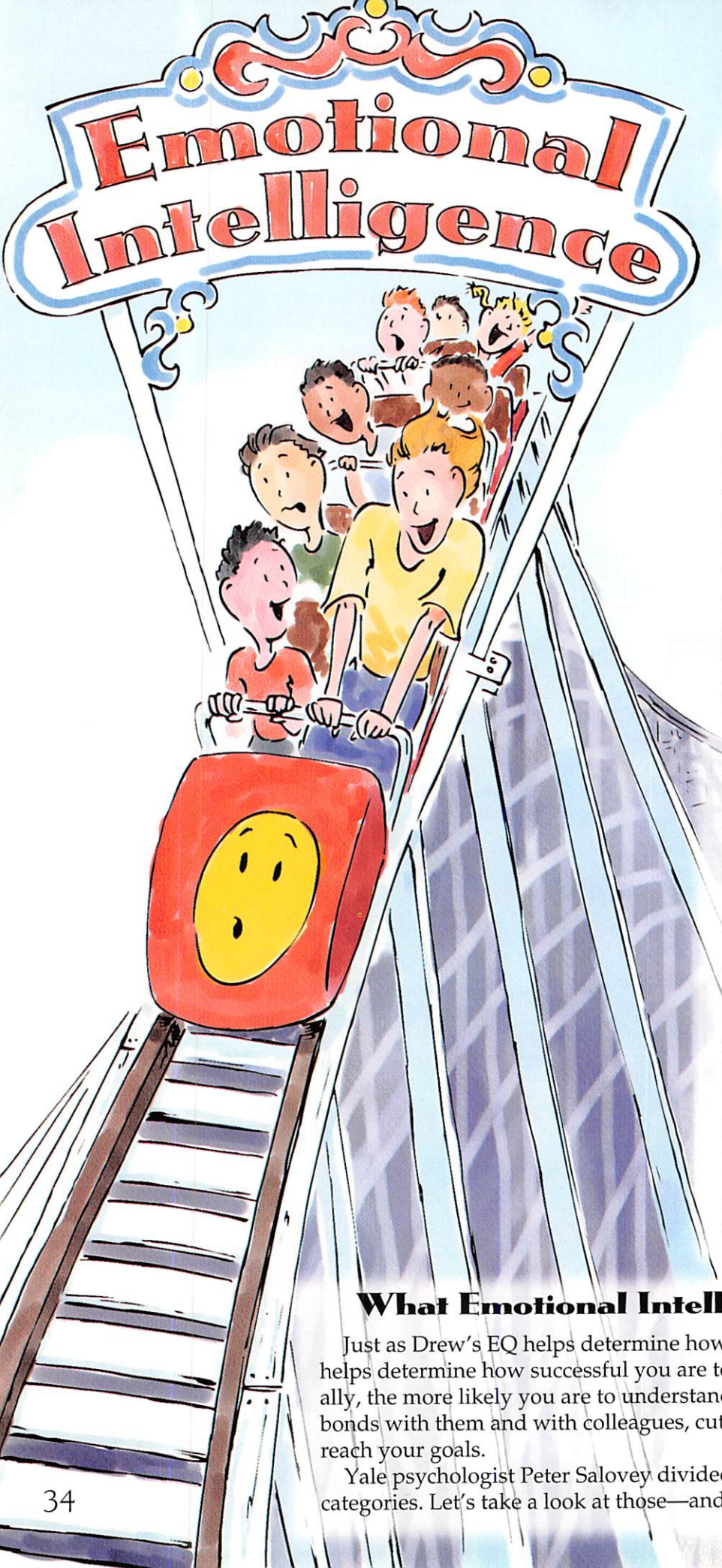
These techniques will require some practice and lots of self-control on the part of the victim, but they can be quite effective. To read more advice from Robert Kayton, visit www.washingtonparent.com. Click on Articles and November 1997.

That Isn't Funny!

Anytime a child turns on the TV, he's bound to see examples of put-downs and name-calling—and in many cases these get lots of laughs from the audience! Ask your students to record examples of put-downs and name-calling in their favorite shows. Then use these examples to discuss the difference between joking and hurting someone's feelings. Also discuss the fact that these examples are fictional. If these comments were said in real life, no one would be laughing and feelings would be hurt. Finally, have students rewrite segments of the scripts for their favorite TV shows—without the put-downs, of course.

—Rick Crosslin, Chapel Glen Elementary School, Indianapolis, IN





Get On Board To Learn How Nurturing Your Emotional Intelligence Can Mean More Teaching Success

by Rose Reissman
New York City Public Schools
New York, NY

You've probably had a student like Drew. When it comes to academics, Drew is at the head of the class. He wins the geography bee, writes clever stories, and rarely misses a problem on math tests. But Drew is also the student who's most likely to be in tears during center time, to be sent in from the playground for misbehaving, or to forget his homework three days in a row. Drew seems to be gifted in some ways, but not in others.

Students like Drew got a lot of attention a few years ago when Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* hit the best-seller list. Now Goleman has another book, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, and the topic of emotional intelligence is back in the news.

Goleman's main idea is that *emotional intelligence* (EQ)—which includes self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, enthusiasm, empathy, and other emotional skills—is a main factor in how well a person does in life. In fact, the factor that we traditionally think is most important in a person's success, his or her regular IQ, actually contributes only about 20 percent to that success, Goleman says. The other 80 percent comes from factors such as EQ.

What Emotional Intelligence Means For You

Just as Drew's EQ helps determine how successful he is in school, your EQ helps determine how successful you are too. The better skilled you are emotionally, the more likely you are to understand what your students need, form strong bonds with them and with colleagues, cut stress, manage your time well, and reach your goals.

Yale psychologist Peter Salovey divided emotional intelligence into five basic categories. Let's take a look at those—and at what they mean for you every day.

1. Teacher, Know Thyself

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize a feeling as it happens. If your self-awareness is well developed, your emotions won't take you by surprise.

One of the best ways to keep positive emotions flowing is to infuse your teaching with what you love: singing, writing, art, dance, cooking, whatever. Your enjoyment will come through, and your students will benefit from your pleasure in learning. Adding your personal flair can increase your self-esteem and decrease classroom stress too.

2. Keeping Emotions In Check

When you're working with 20 or 30 children, a student outburst or other disruption can happen at any time. These outbursts can be frustrating and even downright aggravating. Part of your job is to have your own emotions in check so you're prepared to handle whatever comes up. An emotional outburst on your part—or even the hint of one—won't help the situation.

Some teachers are naturally more emotional than others and therefore are more affected by students' actions. If your emotions are easy for others to read, you may find you have to practice controlling your facial expressions and gestures or softening your voice so you don't give away how you're feeling.

It's hard to remember at the time, but often student disruptions aren't *really* directed at you at all—they have more to do with what's happening in the child's personal life. Your calm handling of the situation will help you get your class off the emotional roller coaster and back onto solid ground.

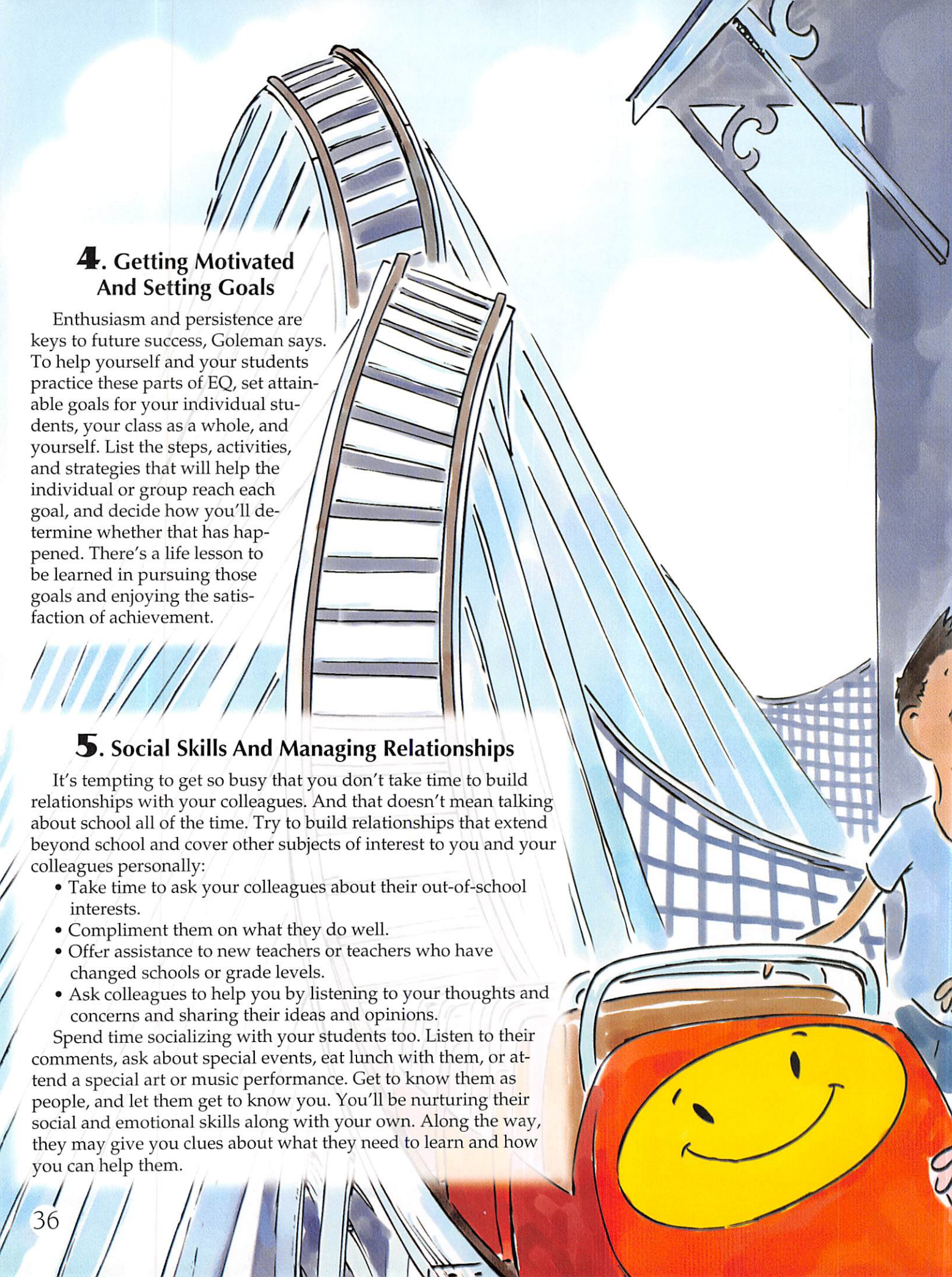
3. Exercising Your Empathy

Learning to put yourself in a student's shoes can help you discover how best to reach that child. What do you think Elise is really trying to tell you when she won't do her homework or acts out in class? By looking at situations from the student's perspective, you'll be better able to get through to that child. Empathy builds on your self-awareness and will help you relieve stress and handle situations creatively.

Of course, the classroom isn't your only source of stress. The demands of administrators and parents are stressful also. Empathy helps here too. Rather than opposing, avoiding, fighting, or eluding requests, try using empathy to look at requests from the administrator's or parent's perspective. Ask yourself,

- What might be causing the administrator or parent to make this request or act this way?
- Is there any misinformation present that I need to clear up?
- What would I want to happen, see, or hear if the roles were reversed?

continued ☛



4. Getting Motivated And Setting Goals

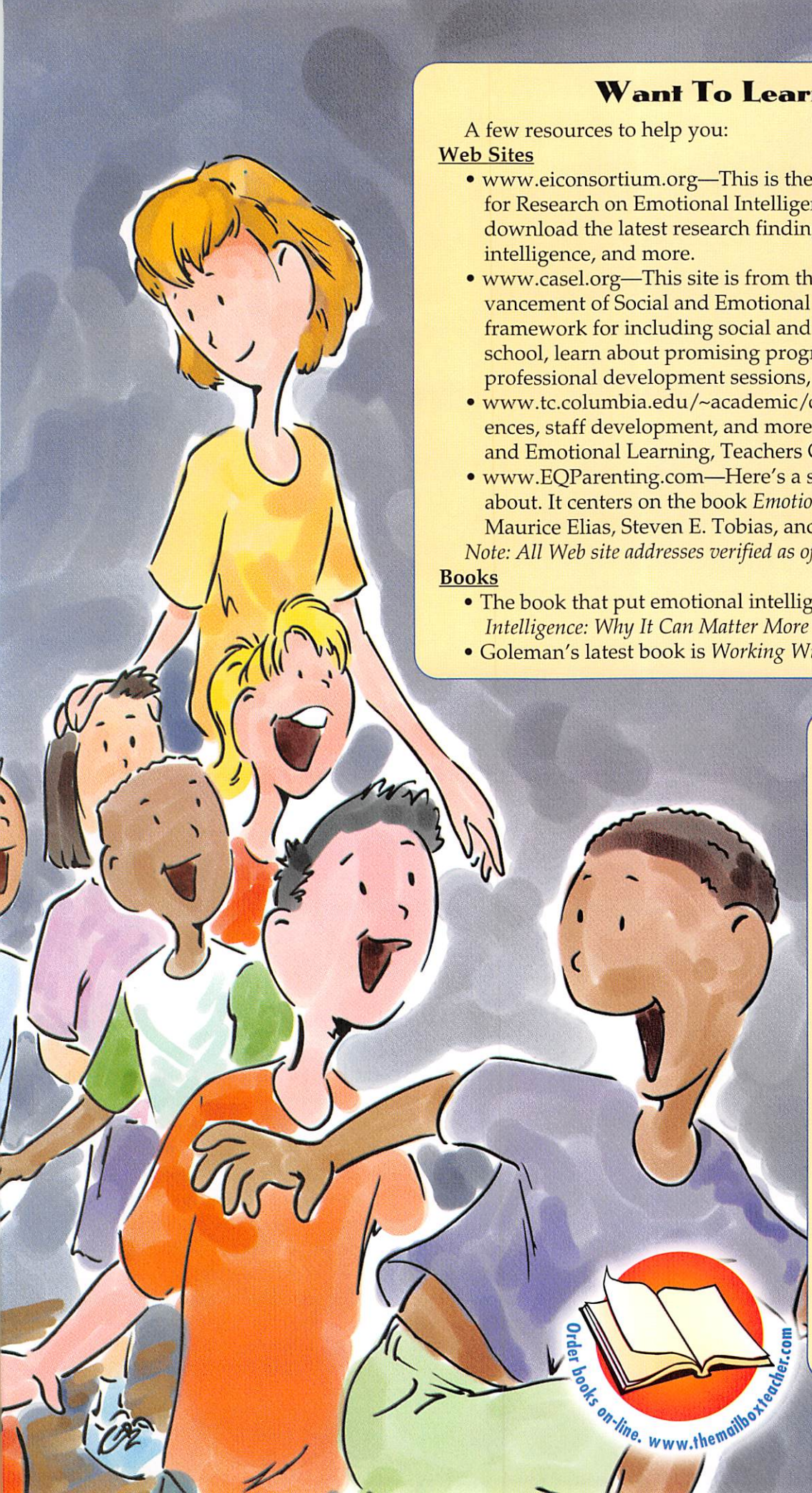
Enthusiasm and persistence are keys to future success, Goleman says. To help yourself and your students practice these parts of EQ, set attainable goals for your individual students, your class as a whole, and yourself. List the steps, activities, and strategies that will help the individual or group reach each goal, and decide how you'll determine whether that has happened. There's a life lesson to be learned in pursuing those goals and enjoying the satisfaction of achievement.

5. Social Skills And Managing Relationships

It's tempting to get so busy that you don't take time to build relationships with your colleagues. And that doesn't mean talking about school all of the time. Try to build relationships that extend beyond school and cover other subjects of interest to you and your colleagues personally:

- Take time to ask your colleagues about their out-of-school interests.
- Compliment them on what they do well.
- Offer assistance to new teachers or teachers who have changed schools or grade levels.
- Ask colleagues to help you by listening to your thoughts and concerns and sharing their ideas and opinions.

Spend time socializing with your students too. Listen to their comments, ask about special events, eat lunch with them, or attend a special art or music performance. Get to know them as people, and let them get to know you. You'll be nurturing their social and emotional skills along with your own. Along the way, they may give you clues about what they need to learn and how you can help them.



Want To Learn More?

A few resources to help you:

Web Sites

- www.eiconsortium.org—This is the Web site for the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations. You can download the latest research findings, articles about emotional intelligence, and more.
- www.casel.org—This site is from the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning. You'll find a framework for including social and emotional learning in your school, learn about promising programs, read articles, discover professional development sessions, and more.
- www.tc.columbia.edu/~academic/csel—Learn about conferences, staff development, and more through the Project for Social and Emotional Learning, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- www.EQParenting.com—Here's a site that you can tell parents about. It centers on the book *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting* by Maurice Elias, Steven E. Tobias, and Brian S. Friedlander.

Note: All Web site addresses verified as of March 1999.

Books

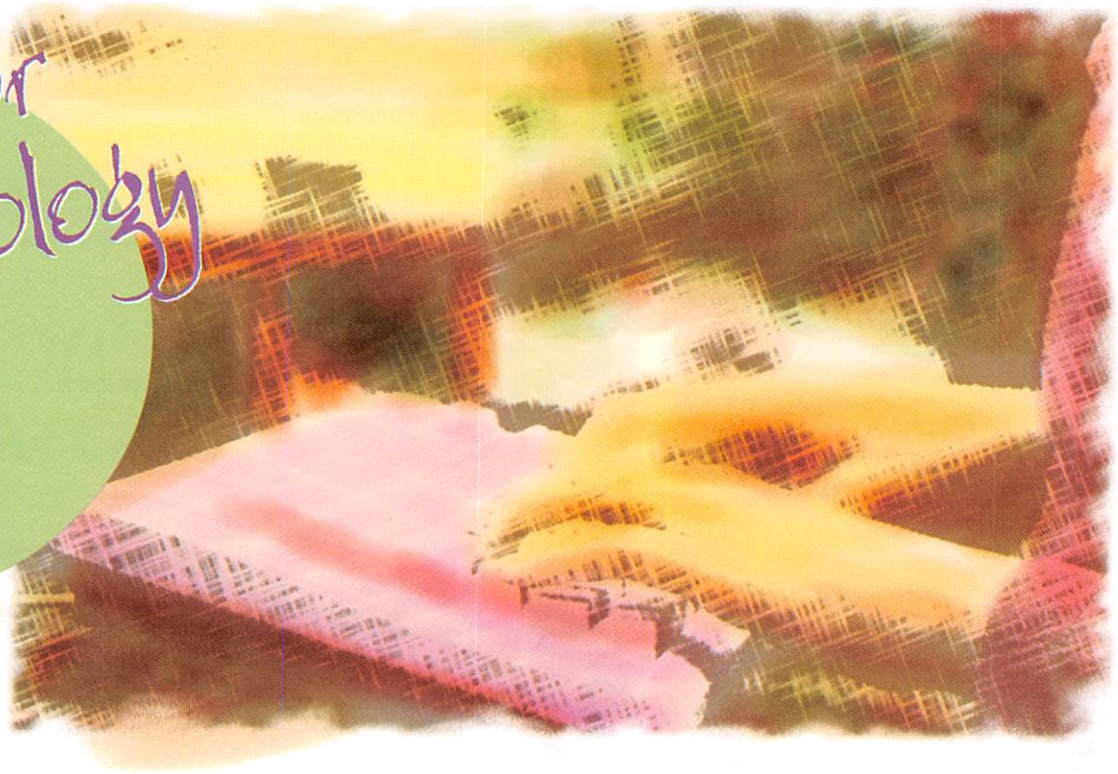
- The book that put emotional intelligence in the news is *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* by Daniel Goleman.
- Goleman's latest book is *Working With Emotional Intelligence.*

How Did We Discover Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence isn't something that researchers dreamed up. In part, it was based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. With that theory, Gardner challenged the idea that there's only one way to be smart. When developing his original list of the seven intelligences, he included *interpersonal intelligence,* the ability to understand other people, and *intrapersonal intelligence,* the ability to understand yourself. Emotional intelligence builds on Gardner's framework by further exploring these intelligences. ●

Order books on-line. www.themailboxteacher.com

Tips for Technology



Making the most of technology in your classroom

Learning From Others

Everyone gets tripped up by technology once in a while. To turn these missteps into learning experiences, keep a journal or notebook near your classroom computer. (If you don't have a computer in your classroom, keep the journal in a spot where students can access it after visiting the computer lab.) Encourage students to use the journal to record their experiences with computers, including problems they encountered and how they solved them. The journal provides real-world writing practice and will develop into a handy troubleshooting guide that everyone can use!

—Marsha Carr-Lambert, Ridgeley, WV

Parent Pick-Me-Up

When you know one of your students' parents is having a rough time, use your classroom computer to create a special pick-me-up. Start with an award that you typically give to your students, such as one that says "You're Doing A Great Job!" Then modify it for parents. For example, a parent award might say, "You're Doing A Great Job At Being A Parent. Keep Up The Good Work!" Print it out and present it to the parent. It's sure to provide a boost just when the parent needs it most!

—Beverley Price, Pinor Elementary, Orlando, FL

Software Showcase

With so many new titles available, keeping up with the latest software can be a challenge. Plus, it's risky to buy untried software because once you've opened the box many stores won't allow you to return it. Here's an easy way to get a preview of software your students may like: once a month, invite kids to bring in their favorite educational software from home. Eat lunch together and give each child a chance to show what the software can do. You might find just what you're looking for, risk free!

—Kimberly Minafo, Tooker Avenue Elementary School, West Babylon, NY

 Ninety-two percent of teachers agree that using the Internet in school is critical in

Praise Read Round The World

Have your students found a book they love? Use the Internet to tell others about that must-read title. Here's what to do:

1. Have a small group of children work together to write a brief book review that explains what makes the book special.
2. Help your students go to the Internet bookstore Amazon.com® at www.amazon.com or to another on-line bookstore that accepts reader reviews. Look up the book and carefully follow the directions for submitting a book review.

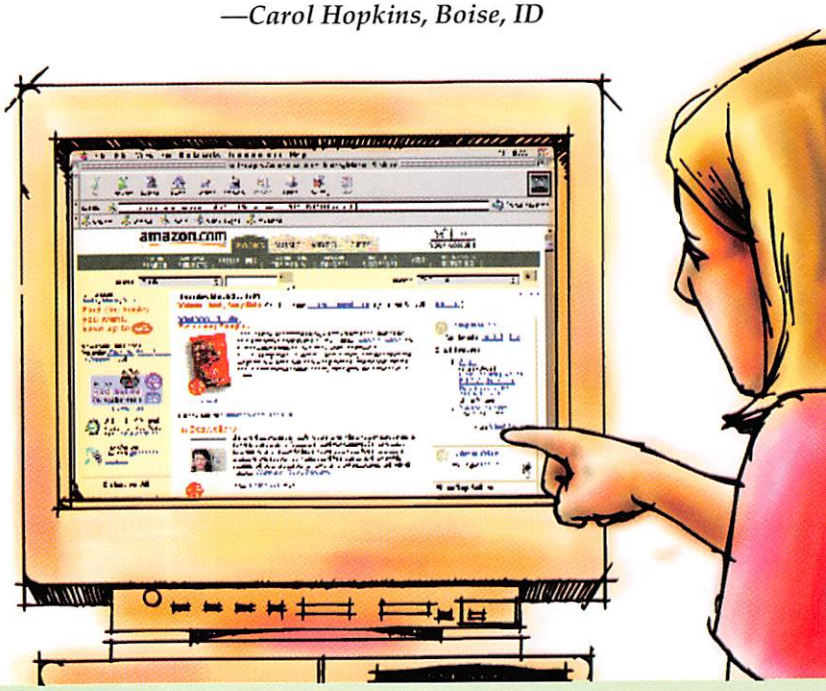
Within a few days, your students' review will be posted on the site. Your students' enthusiasm will be read round the world!

—Carol Hopkins, Boise, ID

Road Map For The Web

Whenever you find a useful site on the Internet, jot down the address in the teacher's edition of your textbook, near the introduction to the subject. You'll have a list of resources right at your fingertips!

—Cathy Ogg, Happy Valley Elementary, Johnson City, TN



What A Site!

Check out these favorite Web sites. All addresses have been verified as of March 1999.

- Create original mazes, word searches, math puzzles, and more at the Puzzlemaker Web site, http://www.puzzlemaker.com. It's fun, easy to use, and a major time-saver!—*Marlene Sclar, Landon School, Bethesda, MD*

- In search of some fresh art ideas? Then http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt_room/@rtroom_home.html is the Web site for you! (What you find there will be worth typing in all those letters!) Can-do projects, facts about famous artists, and exhibits of kids' art make this site a masterpiece!—*Rose Reissman, New York City Public Schools, New York, NY; Elizabeth Gil, FutureKids Inc., New York City Public Schools, New York, NY*

- Here's an all-purpose Web site just for you, http://www.teachers.net. Includes chat boards, live chat, lesson banks, and more. —*Diane Muldoon, St. Matthew's Nursery School, Maple Glen, PA*

- Feeling adventurous? Check out the "Real Kids, Real Adventures" Web site at http://www.realkids.com. Head for the Teacher's Lounge, where you can talk to other teachers, request help, and even visit the Teacher Genie! The site is based on a Discovery Channel® TV show that features kids' brave deeds and real-life adventures. —*Paula Salverson, Lockport, NY*

Okay, You Really Must Be A Teacher If...

Ten More Sure Signs That You're A Teacher Through And Through

You're in the pasta aisle at the grocery store. You see someone beside you and instinctively you know: That woman isn't buying pasta to cook up a nice meal for her family. She's going to color it and string it into necklaces! The feeling comes over you at other times too, such as when you're at the summer clearance sale and you and another shopper both reach for the same inflatable fish. And then there was that time on vacation, when you saw the guy picking up brochures about local historical sites in bunches of 25, right after you'd just done the same thing...

In our Winter 1998–99 issue we asked how you can tell someone is a teacher. Here's a sampling of the many entertaining responses we received!

You must be a teacher if...

Kimberly Richard

- you immediately assume that "the new year" starts in September.

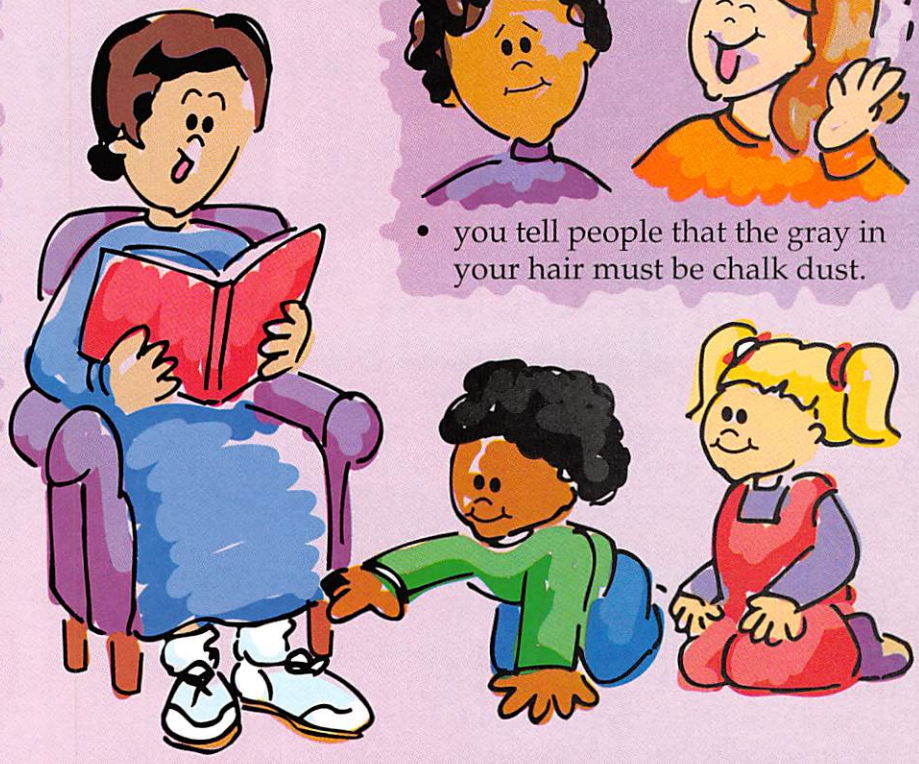
- you're thrilled to see an empty paper towel roll.

- you've been tempted to call out, "No cuts!" while in line at a store.

- you think of everything bagged and edible as a potential estimation, graphing, or fractions project.

- you've ever complained about paying $1 for a hot meal.

- you tell people that the gray in your hair must be chalk dust.



- you've ever had your socks felt while you're reading aloud.

- when reading a steamy romance novel, you can't help but notice the grammatical errors.

- you schedule all of your appointments for 4:05 P.M.

- at the end of the day your hands are covered with a rainbow of colors.

Ideas contributed by
JoAnne Condelli, Nazareth, PA
Nori R. Cortez, Robb Elementary, Uvalde, TX
Amy DeNike, Kingsville Elementary School, Kingsville, MD
Jason Jones, Bevis Elementary, Cincinnati, OH
Lora Krouse, Fairview Elementary School, Santa Fe, NM
Grace Long, Advent Episcopal Day School, Birmingham, AL
Connie Patridge and Kevin Dighton, Roosevelt Elementary School, Davenport, IA
Dorette Putonti, Hamilton Park Pacesetter Magnet, Dallas, TX
Donna Kirk, Bryant Elementary School, Bryant, AL
Kris Wesson, Adna Elementary School, Adna, WA
Beth Zimmerman-Voellm, Alexandria Country Day School, Alexandria, VA

Clara Barton? George Washington? Frederick Douglass?

What Are *You* Doing Here?

This Year, Invite Some Unexpected Guests Into Your Classroom!

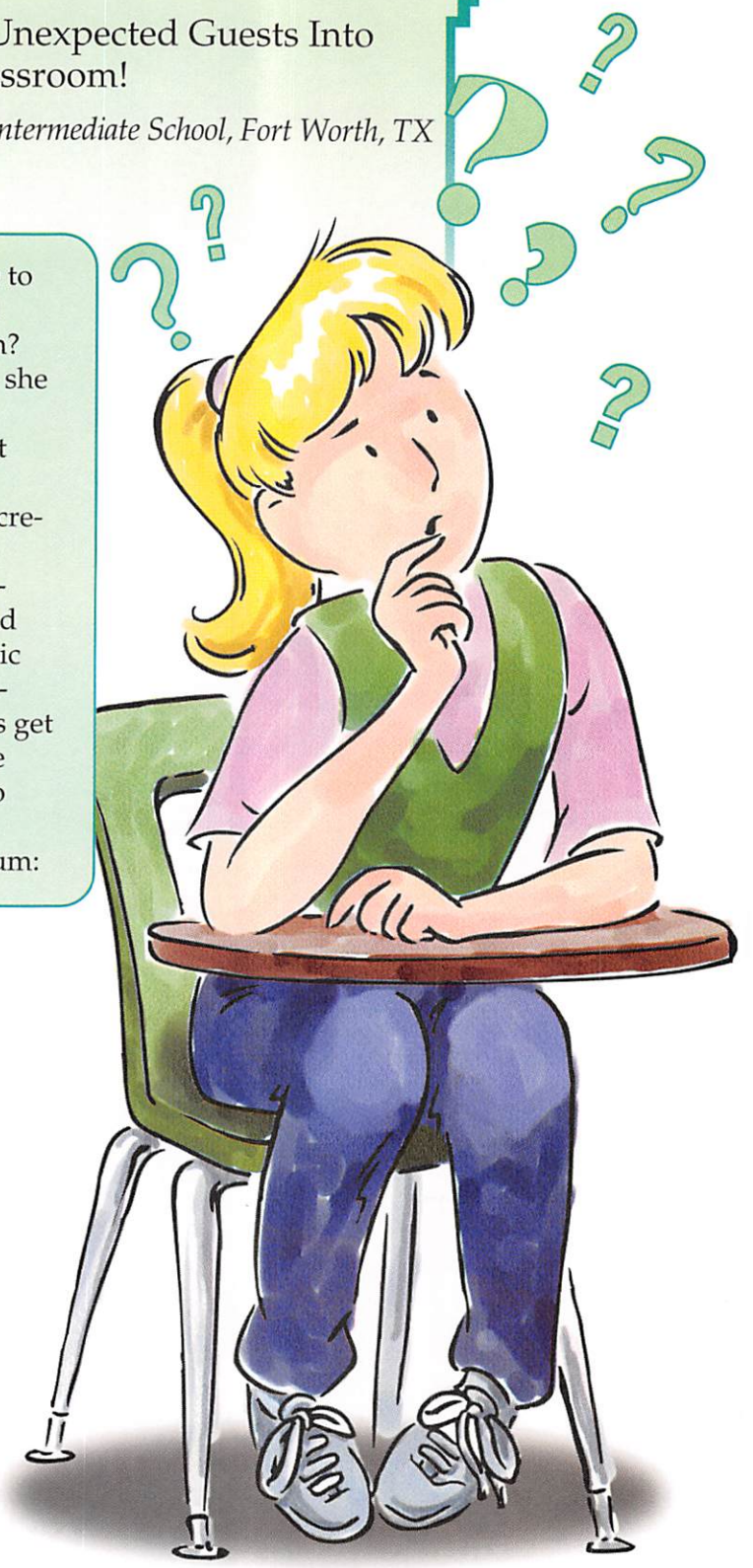
by Marsha Horder, Chisholm Trail Intermediate School, Fort Worth, TX

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to have George Washington step into your classroom and teach your students about the founding of a new nation? Or perhaps Clara Barton could come to talk about how she started the American Red Cross. And then Frederick Douglass could stop by to speak to your students about what it was like to lead the abolitionist movement.

Impossible, you say? Not if you and your students create a Living Museum!

To create a Living Museum, each child chooses a famous person to research and write about. Then the child develops a costume and, if appropriate, memorizes basic information about the person. This all leads up to a museum-style presentation for parents and peers. Students get involved and excited about this project, and parents are amazed and proud to watch their children transform so convincingly into Babe Ruth or Betsy Ross.

Here's how to open the doors to your Living Museum:



1. Whom Shall I Be?

Have each child choose a different person to research. Encourage students to think about people they've studied in social studies or have read stories about. Tell them that oftentimes it's easier to find information on people who are deceased than on those who are living. The key is to help each student find someone he or she is interested in.

Once you've explained how the Living Museum works, give students an idea of what to do by modeling a Living Museum presentation yourself. If possible, videotape this year's presentations so you can show them to next year's class.

2. Digging Up The Facts

Now it's time for students to begin their research. Prepare a list of questions for students to answer. For starters, have each child find out the following about his or her person:

- date of birth
- date of death
- what the person was famous for
- how and when the person became interested in what they were famous for
- major accomplishments
- hobbies
- personal background, such as if the person was married and had children
- a little-known fact

In addition, each student should find a picture of the person so he or she knows how the person looked and dressed.

Schedule several research sessions in the library. Explain to students how you expect them to conduct their research, such as if you want them to document where they find information and whether they should use particular sources.

Next, have students write one- to two-minute presentations based on what they learned in their research. Let students practice reading their presentations in front of the class or in small groups. Have classmates give feedback and suggestions, such as helping each student figure out if parts of the presentation are too long or are unclear. Once the presentation is finalized, encourage the student to memorize it.

continued ☛

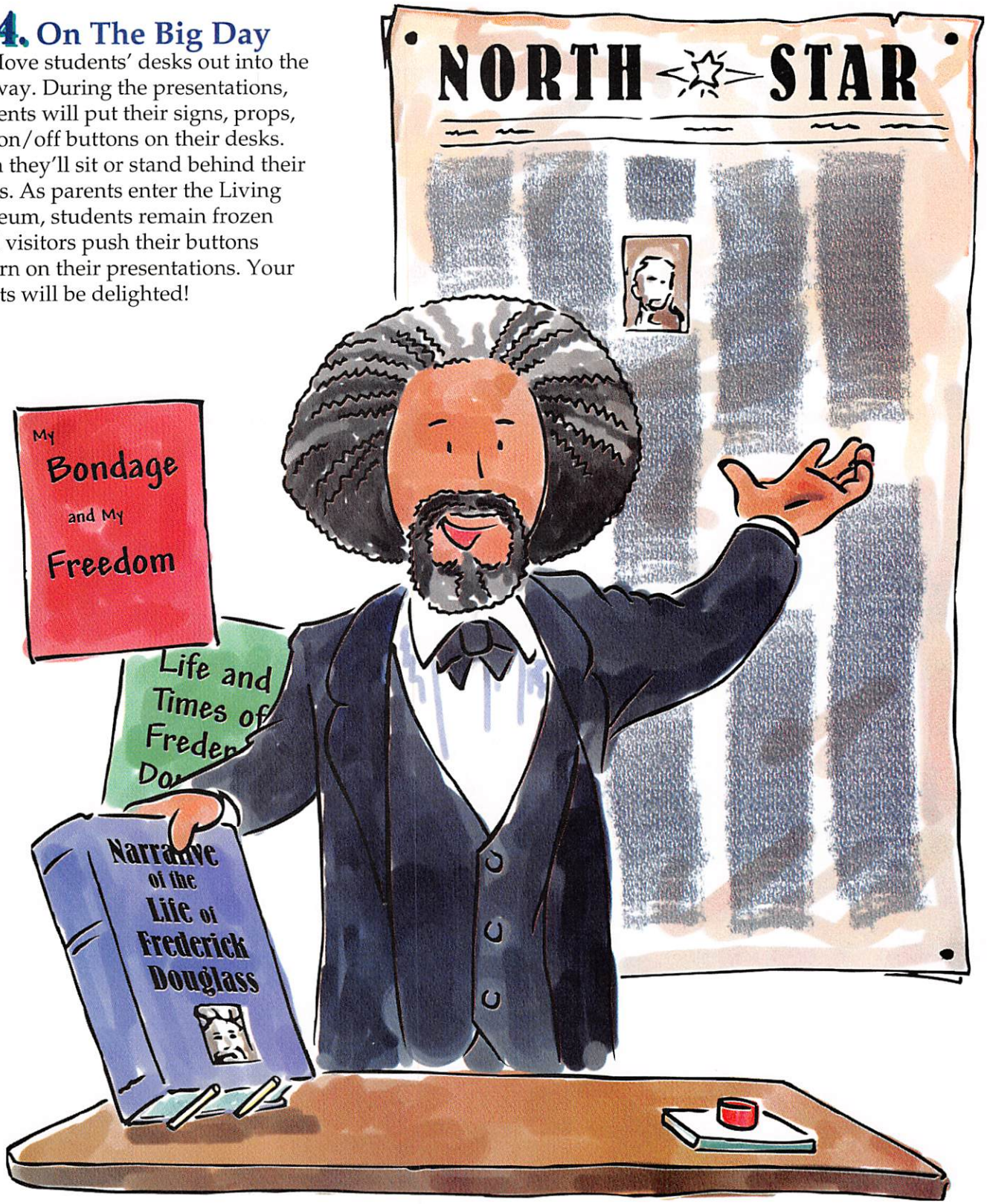
3. Calling The Costume Department

The next step is for each student to plan a costume to look like his or her famous person. Explain that the costumes will help catch the audience's interest. Most likely students will need assistance from parents.

Remind students that museums typically have plaques or signs that give information about the exhibits. If an exhibit has sound or movement, there's usually a button for visitors to push to start the presentation. Provide materials for the children to make their own signs and on/off buttons. Sponges cut into circles and mounted on poster board make good on/off buttons because visitors can actually push them. Small, twist-off lids from items—such as sauces, cooking oil, or soft drinks—also make authentic-looking buttons. Once the presentations, costumes, and props are ready, schedule a dress rehearsal for students to practice in front of other classes.

4. On The Big Day

Move students' desks out into the hallway. During the presentations, students will put their signs, props, and on/off buttons on their desks. Then they'll sit or stand behind their desks. As parents enter the Living Museum, students remain frozen until visitors push their buttons to turn on their presentations. Your guests will be delighted!



Gee, Harriet, Thanks For Stopping By

The project integrates lots of essential skills and curricula. Plus it helps parents see what students are learning—and that they're excited about learning.

Maybe Harriet Tubman never will actually come to talk to your students about her life. But this project is the next best thing to having her there! ●

Teacher Bulletin Board

Looking for pen pals? Want to exchange postcards? Seeking a special lesson plan? Post those requests—and more—here!

Pen Pals

My K–6 class would like to have pen pals. These students are in a before- and after-school program. Patsy McKay, Jack & Jills, 3748 S. Washington, Titusville, FL 32780
JACKANDJILL@metrolink.net

We'll swap our Florida seashells and sponges for the naturally occurring items in your area. I'm looking for a fifth-grade class to correspond and trade treasures with my students! Lee Elfrink, Quail Hollow Elementary, 7050 Quail Hollow Blvd., Wesley Chapel, FL 33544

My fifth graders would like to correspond with another class. We want to learn about other cities and states! Mary J. Shivers, Washington School, 13th and Wright St., Gary, IN 46404
sfisher@surfnetinc.com

We're in search of pen pals! Would your class like to correspond with my sixth graders? Jennifer Twehues, St. Philip School, 1400 Mary Ingles Hwy., Melbourne, KY 41059
btwehues@aol.com

Let's have our classes welcome the year 2000 together by becoming pen pals for the upcoming school year. I teach fifth grade. Joanna M. Pierce, St. Joseph School, 376 Maple Pl., Keyport, NJ 07735
jmdonoghue@hotmail.com

P.S. Let's exchange postcards, too!

Beyond The United States

I teach English as a foreign language to seventh graders in Argentina. I'd like to correspond with other teachers interested in sharing ideas and experiences. I'm looking forward to hearing from you! Graciela Yugdar Tofalo, Buenos Aires 455, Parana-Entre Rios, Argentina, 3100

Be our e-mail pals! My sixth graders would like to correspond with fifth- or sixth-grade students on the East Coast. Sally Quintana, quintanasb@espanola-nm.com

Tutoring An LD Child

Please send your suggestions! Jane Thomas, 1268 West 2nd Ave., Columbus, OH 43212

Postcard Exchanges

We'd like to exchange postcards with other classes. Our kindergarten class will reply to all senders! Please tell us a little about your state. Myrna Perkins, Read-Pattillo Elementary, 400 Sixth St., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168

Please send my first graders a postcard showing your town or state. We'll return the favor! Emma Wages, St. Matthew School, 2580 Benton St., Akron, OH 44312

We'd like to exchange postcards and interesting facts with other classrooms near and far. My fourth and fifth graders will gladly respond! Warren Hershberger, Santrock Elementary School, 88 Nineteenth St. NW, Barberton, OH 44203

My fourth graders are studying regions of the United States. We'd like to receive postcards from every state. We'll send one from Connecticut in return. Karen Gambardella, Center School, 462 Oxford Rd., Oxford, CT 06478

Drop a postcard in the mail to my sixth graders to help them learn geography. We'll gladly return the favor! Jennifer Twehues, St. Philip School, 1400 Mary Ingles Hwy., Melbourne, KY 41059

Sub Tips

I'm working toward my teaching certificate and I'm substitute teaching. Please share your best tips for substitute teachers and for new teachers. I hope to have my own class soon! Susan Galko, 27 Emmans Rd., Ledgewood, NJ 07852 galk@webspan.net.

Cooking Up Learning

My fourth graders are learning about regions of the United States. We're collecting recipes from different areas. Please send us a recipe from your area. We'd be happy to send you one from ours! Michelle Briegel, MacGowan Elementary, 18255 Kinloch, Redford, MI 48240

Would you like to include a notice in our Winter 1999–2000 issue? Now's the time to send it in!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____ Grade(s) Taught _____

Notice _____

_____

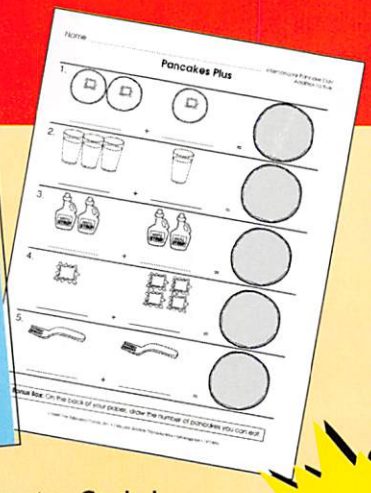
_____

_____

Mail: *The Mailbox® Teacher* Bulletin Board, 3515 W. Market St., Greensboro, NC 27403
Fax: (336) 547-1590 **Email:** editor@themailboxteacher.com
Notices submitted before August 15, 1999, will be featured in our Winter 1999–2000 issue on a space-available basis. They may also be included on our Web site.

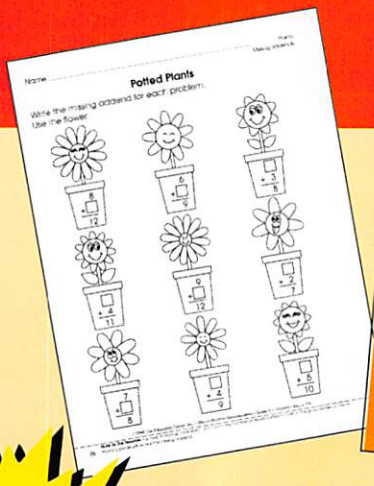
ENERGIZE Your Classroom With Monthly Reproducible Activity Books!

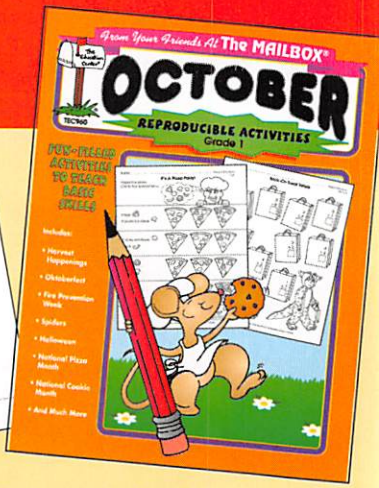
•••September•••



Available in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grades 2–3, Grades 4–5

•••October•••

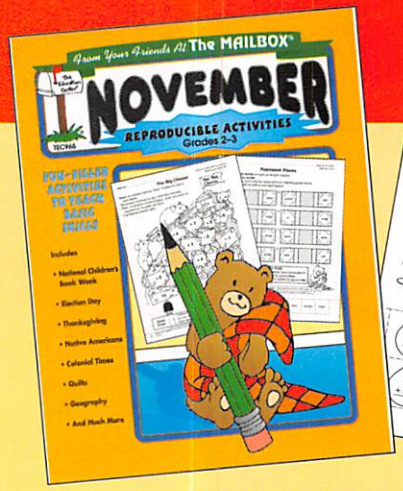


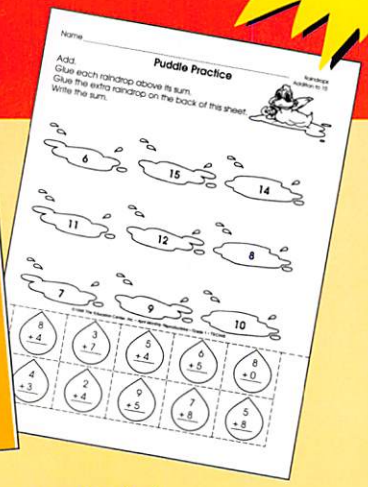


Available in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grades 2–3, Grades 4–5

ALL-NEW IDEAS!

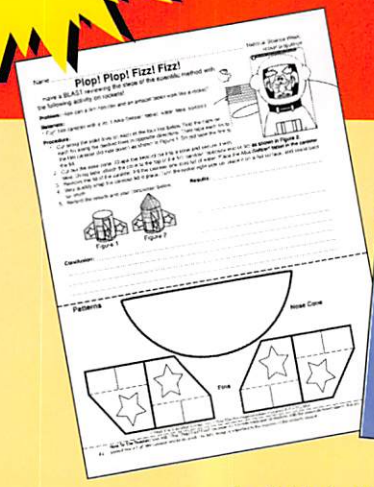
•••November•••

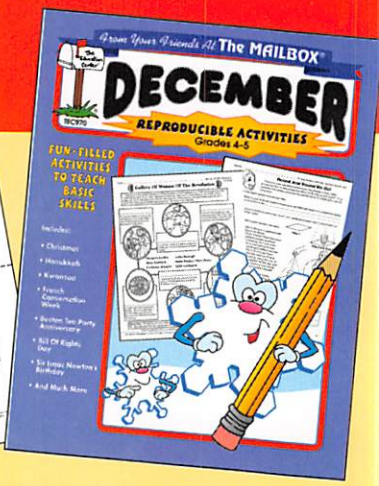




Available in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grades 2–3, Grades 4–5

•••December•••





Available in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grades 2–3, Grades 4–5

Each 64-page book is packed full of creative, never-before-published reproducible activities just for your grade level, plus background information and follow-up ideas. This new series is designed to be used either independently or in conjunction with our best-selling line of monthly idea books. $9.95 each.

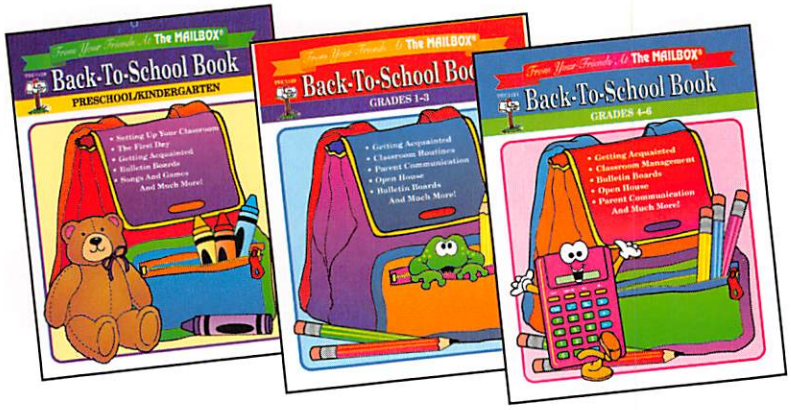
1-800-714-7991 • Order On-Line: www.themailbox.com

3515 West Market Street • P.O. Box 9753 • Greensboro, NC 27429-0753

Also Available At Your Local School Supply Store

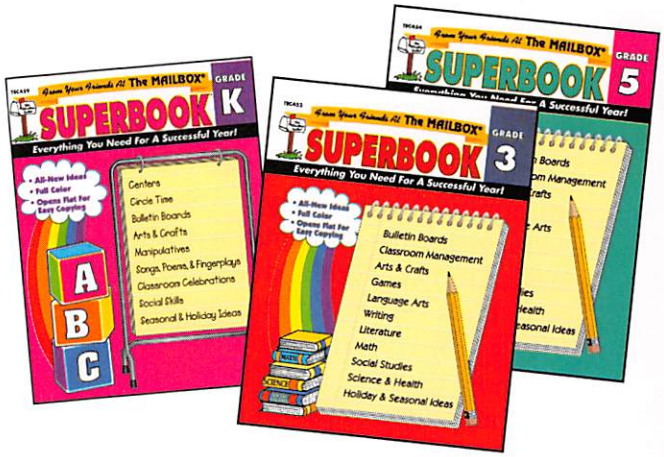
AMAC

We Wrote The *Book* For Back-To-School!



BACK-TO-SCHOOL BOOKS

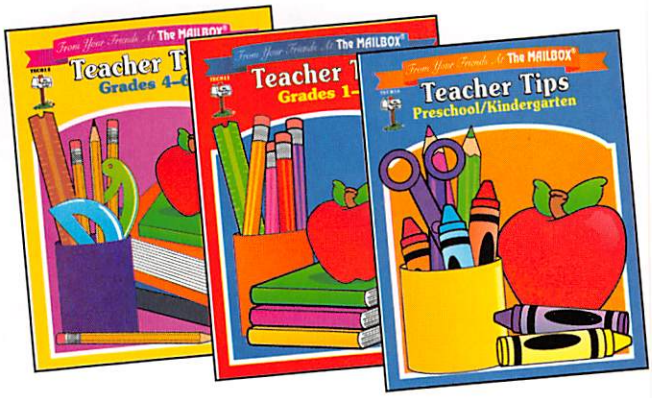
Each book features teacher-tested tips on getting acquainted with students and managing your class, as well as ideas for eye-catching bulletin boards and much more! The ideas and activities in these books are arranged so that you can refer to a topic quickly, then choose the idea suited to your individual needs. Available for three grade levels: Preschool/Kindergarten, Grades 1–3, and Grades 4–6. 96 pages. $12.95


SUPERBOOK K
Everything You Need For A Successful Year!
SUPERBOOK 3
Everything You Need For A Successful Year!
SUPERBOOK 5

SUPERBOOK™

•ALL-NEW Ideas •Opens Flat For Easy Copying

These giant 320-page books are all-new, grade-specific collections packed with unique and creative ideas to enhance and supplement all areas of the curriculum. Inside this comprehensive collection are tons of ideas for seasonal projects, classroom setup, discipline, basic skills, all subject areas, and much, much more! Patterns and reproducibles are included. Available in 7 grade specific editions: Preschool–Grade 5. $29.95



TEACHER TIPS

This book provides quick tips for classroom management, parent conferences, bulletin boards, and arts and crafts. You'll find new ways to teach basic skills, motivate your students, and build self-esteem. Available in Preschool/Kindergarten, Grades 1–3, and Grades 4–6. 160 pages. $16.95

MONTHLY IDEA BOOKS

Here are hundreds of all-new, never-before-published ideas from the editors of *The Mailbox®* magazine. These colorful monthly resource books are overflowing with the essentials teachers need every month, including arts-and-crafts ideas and across-the-curriculum theme units. Also included in these timesaving treasures are patterns, reproducibles, and awards. Available in Preschool/Kindergarten, Grades 1–3, and Grades 4–6. 96 pages. $12.95

•easy arts-and-crafts ideas •reproducible skill sheets
•monthly forms and calendars •theme units •literature links

1-800-714-7991 • Order On-Line: www.themailbox.com

3515 West Market Street • P.O. Box 9753 • Greensboro, NC 27429-0753

Also Available At Your Local School Supply Store

AMAC

It's A Small World After All

Can-Do Ideas For Introducing Your Students To The Real World

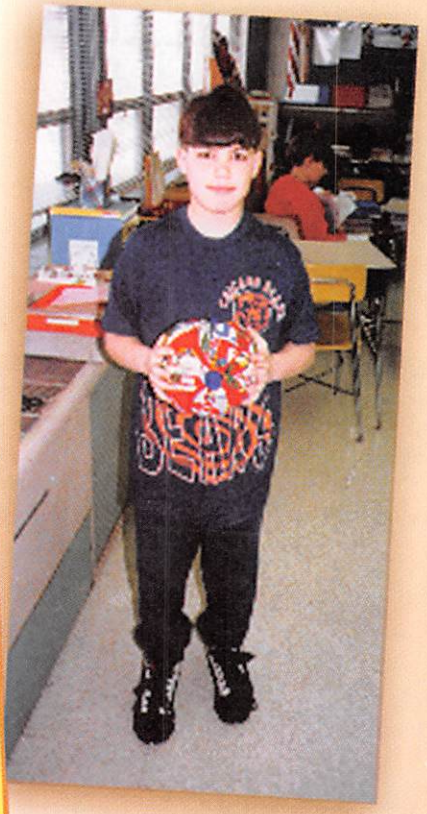
"Sew" Wonderful To Help!

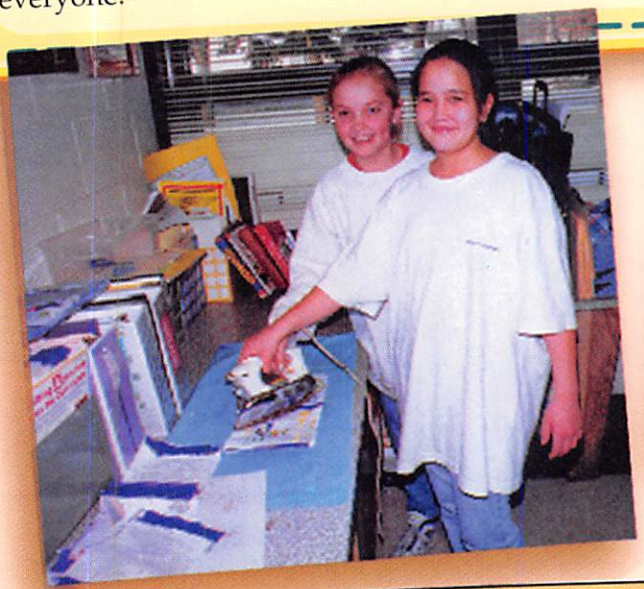
These fifth graders are in stitches over helping people in their community.

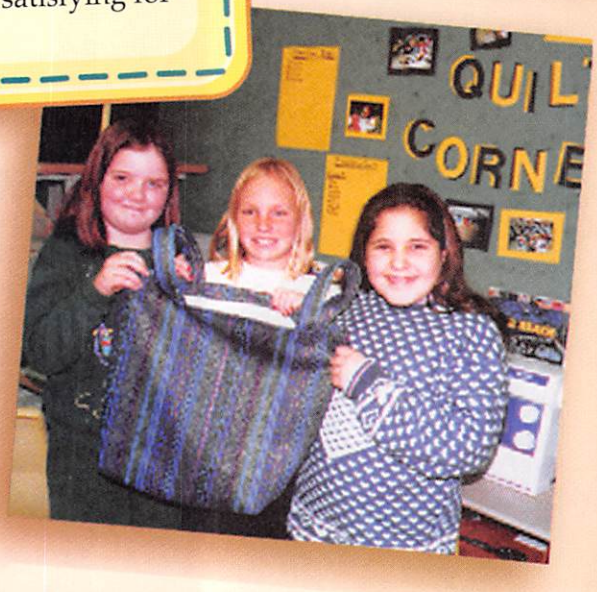
When Karen Coffinbargar's fifth graders see a need in their community, they're likely to stitch up a solution. Over the past several years, the students have made pillows for senior citizens, wheelchair bags for the disabled, stuffed toys for newborns, and even a book report quilt to hang in their own school.

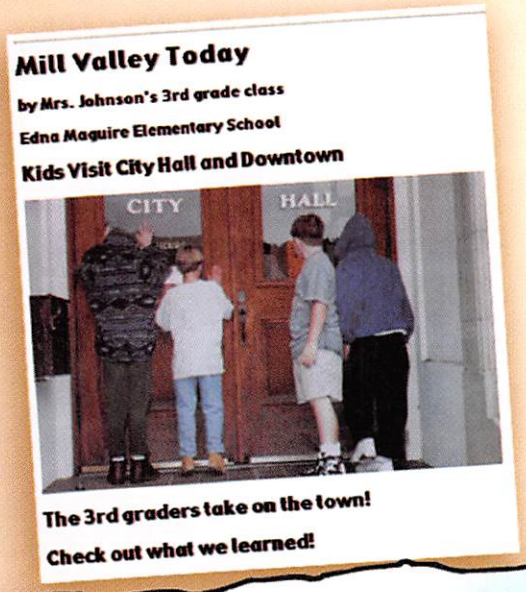
The project started when Karen "sewed up" a minigrant from her school district, which she used to purchase a sewing machine, fabric, and other supplies. At first, students were a little in awe of the sewing machine. "They kept saying, 'You mean we get to touch it?' " Karen recalls. She taught small groups how to use the machine, and they quickly became comfortable with it. In fact, several students have since asked for their own sewing machines as gifts. Others come to school early so they can sew.

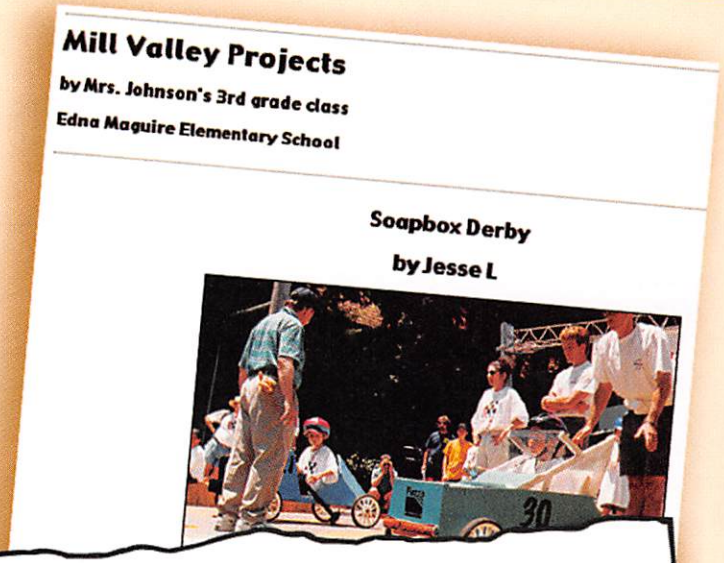
The projects provide a great way to integrate real-life math, reading, art, and social studies, Karen says. Plus making items helps students experience the joy and satisfaction of identifying a need and using their skills to help others. It's "sew" satisfying for everyone!








Mill Valley Today
by Mrs. Johnson's 3rd grade class
Edna Maguire Elementary School
Kids Visit City Hall and Downtown
CITY
HALL
The 3rd graders take on the town!
Check out what we learned!



Our Town

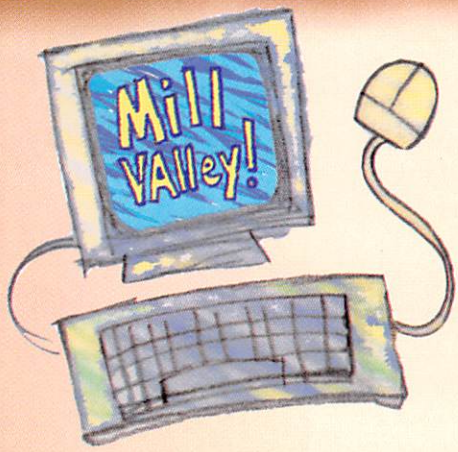
Students and teachers at Edna Maguire Elementary School put their town on the map—and on the Internet! Once you see their site, you'll understand just how much learning a project like this can yield.

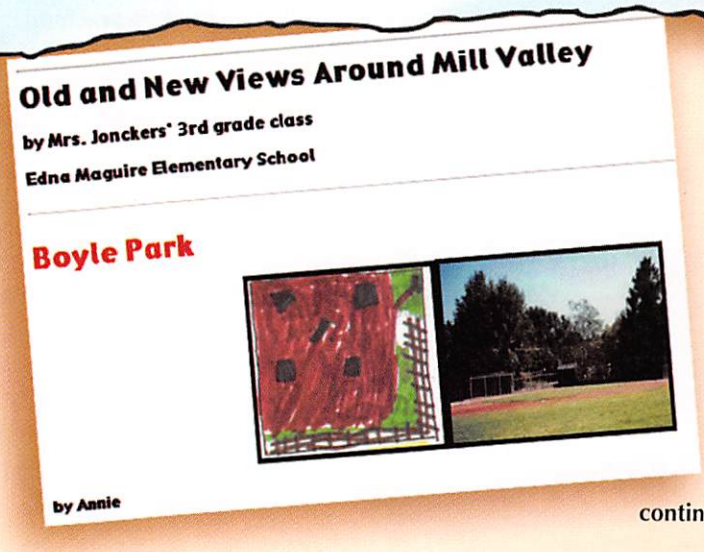
Never been to Mill Valley, California? You'll get a kid's-eye view of the town's interesting nooks and crannies with a visit to http://marin.k12.ca.us/~edmaweb/OUR_TOWN/OTindex.html. This site was created by third graders at Edna Maguire Elementary (with just a little help from their teachers and parents) as part of their study of the community.

Each third-grade class concentrated on one part of the town's history: Our Town Today was the focus for Mrs. Johnson's class, Curious Kids' Questions About Our Town was the focus for Mrs. Phelps's class, Historical Sites And The City Timeline was the focus for Mrs. Reynolds's class, and Old And New Views Around Mill Valley was the focus for Mrs. Jonckers's class. Students conducted interviews, did research, drew pictures, and took photos. As students decided how they wanted their sections to look, they realized they needed to know how to type their text accurately, scan pictures, and use their Web page software.

Once the initial site was created, other classes began to build from it. "It's a living document for us," says teacher Susan Johnson. "This Web site is growing into a real resource, not only for the kids that have done the work but also for the kids who continue to use their work. It's a very rich way for kids to explore."

For their efforts, students won a grand prize in the Our Town Merit Competition, sponsored by the Computer Learning Foundation. To learn more about the contest, check out www.computerlearning.org. *(Web site addresses verified as of March 1999.)*



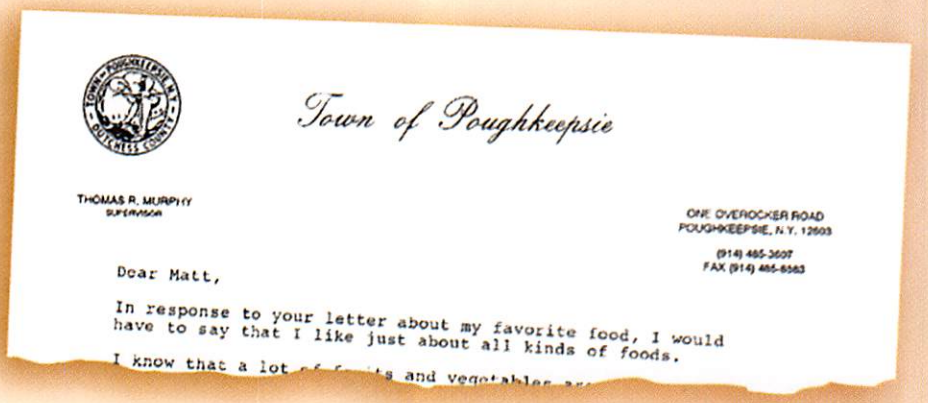


continued ☛

Let's Do Lunch!

Cook up some tasty learning by inviting special guests to dine in your classroom. They'll be pleased to accept!

If you can't take your class out into the community every day, invite the community to school instead. You'll find that a local theater manager, a CEO, a church rector, a television personality, and even the mayor are all likely to be delighted to "do lunch" with your class.


Town of Poughkeepsie

THOMAS R. MURPHY
SUPERVISOR

ONE OVERLOCKER ROAD
POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y. 12603
(914) 485-3607
FAX (914) 485-6583

Dear Matt,

In response to your letter about my favorite food, I would have to say that I like just about all kinds of foods.

I know that a lot of fruits and vegetables ar

Here's how teachers Stephen Currie and Sally Taylor at Poughkeepsie Day School, Poughkeepsie, New York, cooked up this project with their first and second graders:

Stephen and Sally explained the project and asked students to brainstorm a list of local celebrities to invite. After a few suggestions like Michael Jordan and Leonardo DiCaprio, students got the idea. Invitees included an author, a newspaper photographer, the postmaster, and a children's librarian.

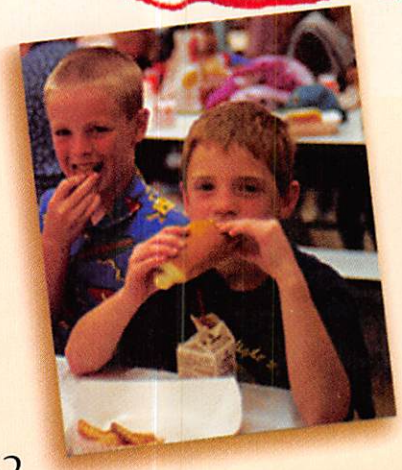
Next Sally and Stephen compiled a list of the potential guests' names and addresses and wrote each on an index card. (Older students could do this themselves.)

Each child chose one index card. Then the classes worked together to draft a sample letter in which students introduced themselves, invited the person to lunch on a date to be determined later, and requested that the person tell the class his favorite lunch food when he replied. Each student wrote a personalized variation on the letter and sent it to her invitee.

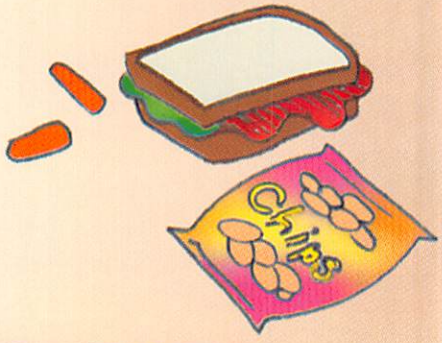
As the responses trickled in, the classes graphed the community members' favorite foods. (Peanut butter sandwiches, chili, fruit, and hot dogs rated high.) Students planned a menu and chose two dates for the lunch. Students then sent official invitations to those who responded to their original letters. Guests selected one of the two dates to come for lunch.

As the lunch dates approached, students wrote a grocery list, made nametags for themselves and their guests, and prepared the food.

On the big day, two students hosted each guest. The children were on their very best behavior. Even the shyest among them were friendly to their guests, helping them navigate through the classrooms and asking questions about their lives and work. And even the bounciest kids managed to sit still for at least a little while!



Over the next few weeks, students repeatedly mentioned what their guests had told them, referred to their graph of guests' favorite foods, and recalled how they'd planned the day and prepared the food. They had a better understanding of the work world and their community—and best of all, an appetite to learn even more.

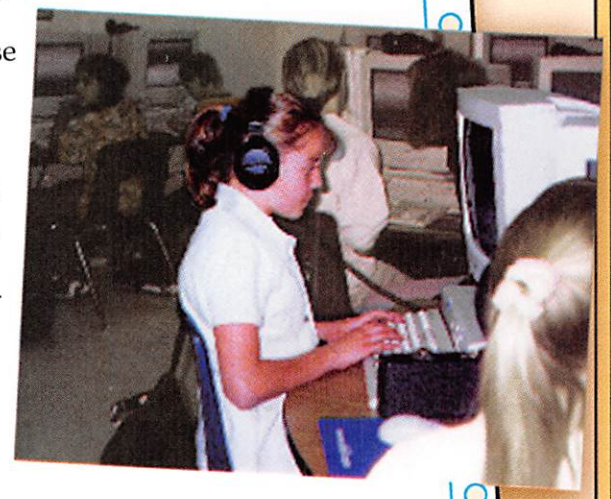


Stepping Into The Business World

Teachers suit up to see how the business world is similar to—and different from—the world of education.

Giving students a realistic picture of how businesses work can be challenging if you've spent your career in education. The two work very differently, in part because change comes quickly to the business world but not as quickly to education. A special internship program in Arizona helps teachers bridge that gap.

Fourth grade is the ideal time for teachers to start discussing work and careers with their students, says Jodi Horton, executive director of the Pima and Santa Cruz Counties School-to-Work Partnership. That's because as early as middle school, students begin choosing classes and making academic choices. If a student decides in high school that he wants to be an engineer but has never taken advanced math, reaching that goal will be more difficult. Knowing about the working world early on helps students make good choices.



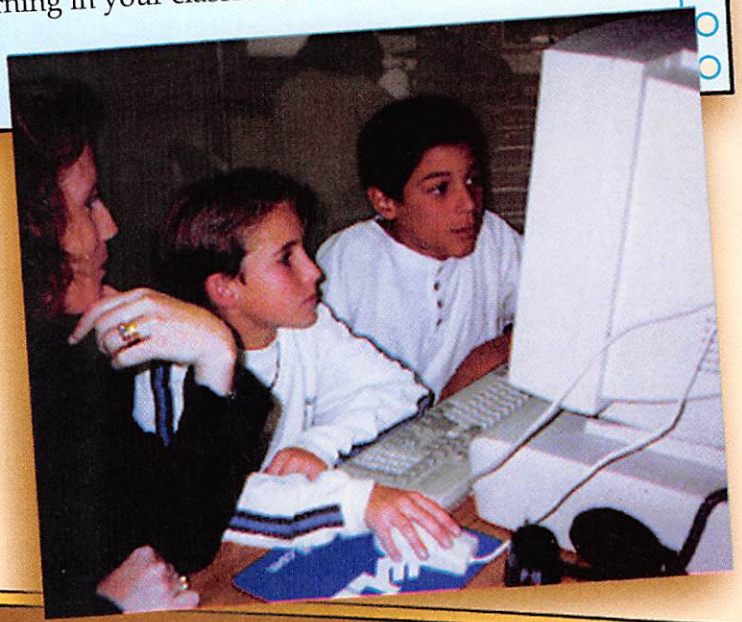
With the internships, more than 100 teachers have spent several weeks in the summer working as caterers, software developers, translators, city planners, human resource professionals—almost any job imaginable. During their internships the teachers meet as a group to discuss what they're learning. They also write lesson plans showing how they'll incorporate what they've learned into their teaching.

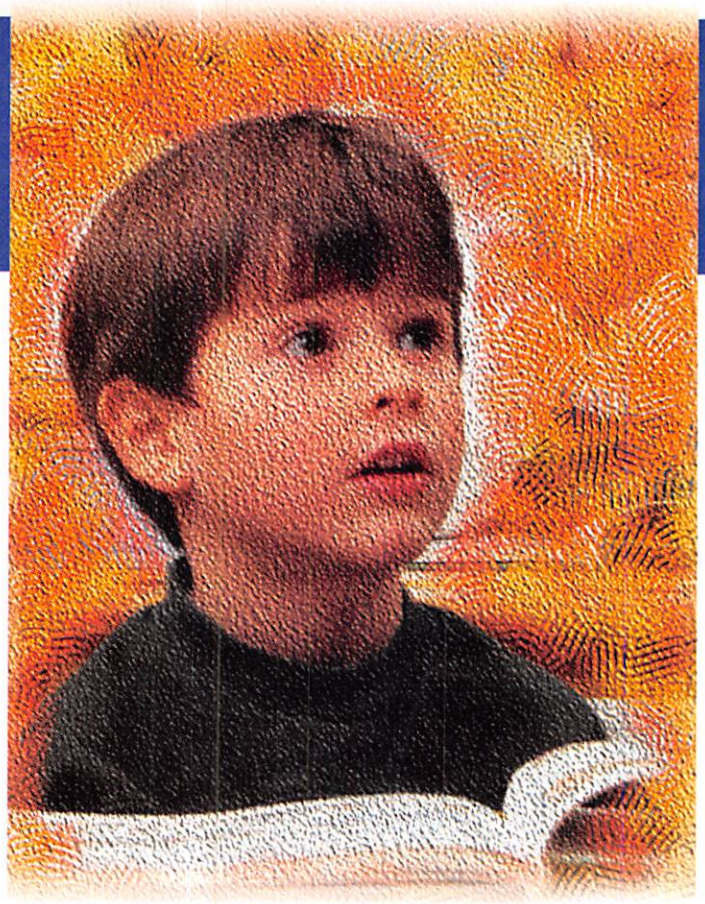
Learning In The Library

Jeannie Gray, a sixth-grade teacher at Estes Elementary in Marana, Arizona, did her internship in IBM's library department. There she learned how technology helps businesspeople both do their current jobs and learn new skills. "In the business world it's essential to know how technology works and how to interact with it," Jeannie says. She learned about on-line training and satellite courses, and she prepared a presentation to tell IBM employees about the educational opportunities available to them.

That experience helped Jeannie do a better job of showing her students the practical applications computers have. "They started to realize computers aren't just for games," she says. Soon they were pointing out computers all around them, from the gas station to the mall. "Plus it made me really comfortable using computers in the classroom," Jeannie says.

If you don't have an internship program in your district, contact a few local businesses to discuss a summer or holiday internship. Whether it's for a day, a week, or a month, you'll gather experiences that can fuel real-life learning in your classroom for a long time to come.●





Learning Disabled? Make That Learning *Enabled!*

Our Readers Share Helpful Ideas They've Discovered

by Diana Hodges, Anson Jones Elementary, Dallas, TX
Lynne Routzong, Western Heights Elementary, Eufaula, AL
Ashley Rebman, Cresset Christian Academy, Durham, NC
Susan DeRiso, John W. Horton School, Cranston, RI
VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE
Sandy Hollstegge, Whitewater Valley Elementary, Harrison, OH
Gail Fleagle, Greensboro, NC

Having a student who is learning disabled can scramble the best-laid teaching plans. But luckily for you, in this issue our readers are sharing some of the helpful tips and timesavers they've discovered. You, too, can make a difference in the life and learning of an LD child.

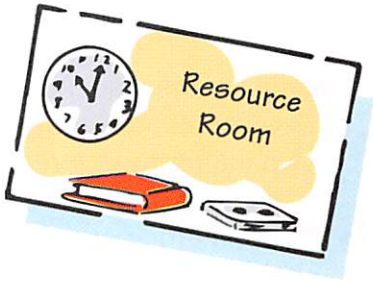
Step #1: Turning To The Special Education Or Resource Teacher

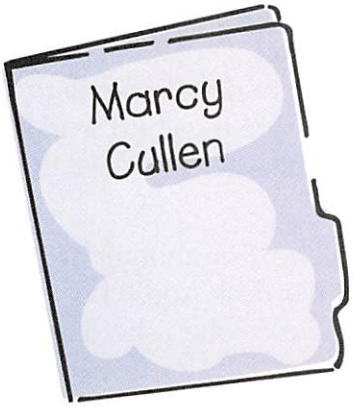
- First of all, get your **paperwork** in order. Ask your special education teacher for the child's individualized education program (IEP), test results, and resource room schedule. Of course you'll need to let the IEP guide you in all the decisions and modifications that you make.
- Discuss the student's **day-to-day routine.** Will the special education teacher be teaching the child certain subjects that match up with your own curriculum? At what grade level can you expect the child to work in various subjects? What books and materials does the special education teacher suggest? If necessary, check with lower-grades teachers to gather appropriate materials. Having the child do as much as possible with the class will help make the adjustment easier and will improve the child's self-esteem.

Step #2: Keeping The LD Child Organized

- Tape the child's **schedule** to his desk to help him remember when to go to the resource room. Also, keep a copy of the child's schedule in your substitute folder. If the child needs extra help in remembering his schedule, put one of your best clock-watchers in charge of reminding him.
- As an alternative, use a **rubber clock stamp** and stamp one index card for each special activity of the day, such as resource room time, lunchtime, time for the child to take his medicine, and so forth. Label each one with words or pictures. Tape these to the student's desktop.

- The child's **return from the resource room** can be disruptive to the rest of the class. Whenever he returns, have him begin working at the computer, at a familiar center, or on a learning packet to minimize the disruption.
- Choose the child's **seat in the classroom** depending on his disability. For example, move the easily distracted child away from the window; or seat the child who tends to move around a lot in the back of the classroom, so he doesn't distract other students.

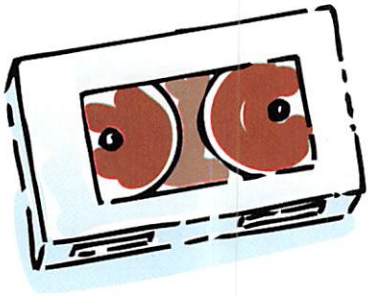




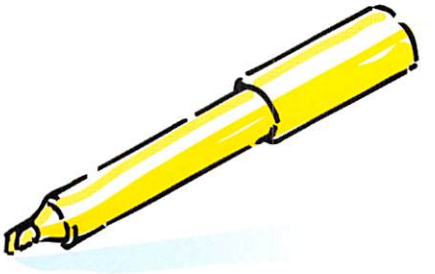
- Provide the child with an **extra set of textbooks** that he can keep at home for use with homework.
- Post the daily schedule on a bulletin board. **Color-code** the subject with the color of the folder or book used for that area.
- Provide the child with a **folder to take home** each day with his work inside. Tell the student that his parents will review his work and sign the folder.
- Allow the student to **tape-record** instructions for homework or announcements of upcoming events.

continued ☛

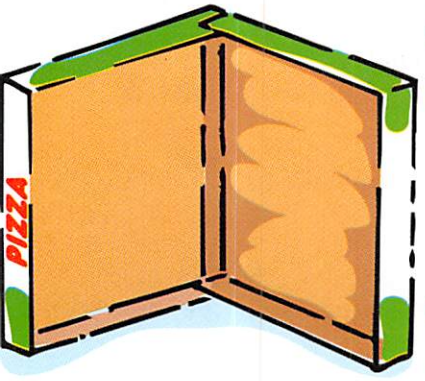
Step #3: Getting The Curriculum In Gear



- Brainstorm lots of options for **how to adapt your curriculum** to the learning disabled child. For example, consider
  - —finding easier-to-read or lower-grades materials on the same subjects that your class is studying
  - —preparing different test questions for the LD child
  - —not requiring the LD child to complete essay questions
  - —telling the LD student in advance what she will be expected to know for tests
  - —allowing the child to use a word bank during tests
  - —highlighting the main sentence in reading materials
  - —making manipulatives available or even allowing the student to keep them at her desk
  - —having books on tape and computer programs available to the student
- If your LD child is using different textbooks, have all of your students make **book covers** for their books. That way, many children won't even realize the LD child is using different materials.
- As a welcome-to-my-classroom gift, give every child a highlighter. Have the kids use these to **highlight important directions** on papers. This helps prevent all students—the LD child in particular—from skipping important steps.



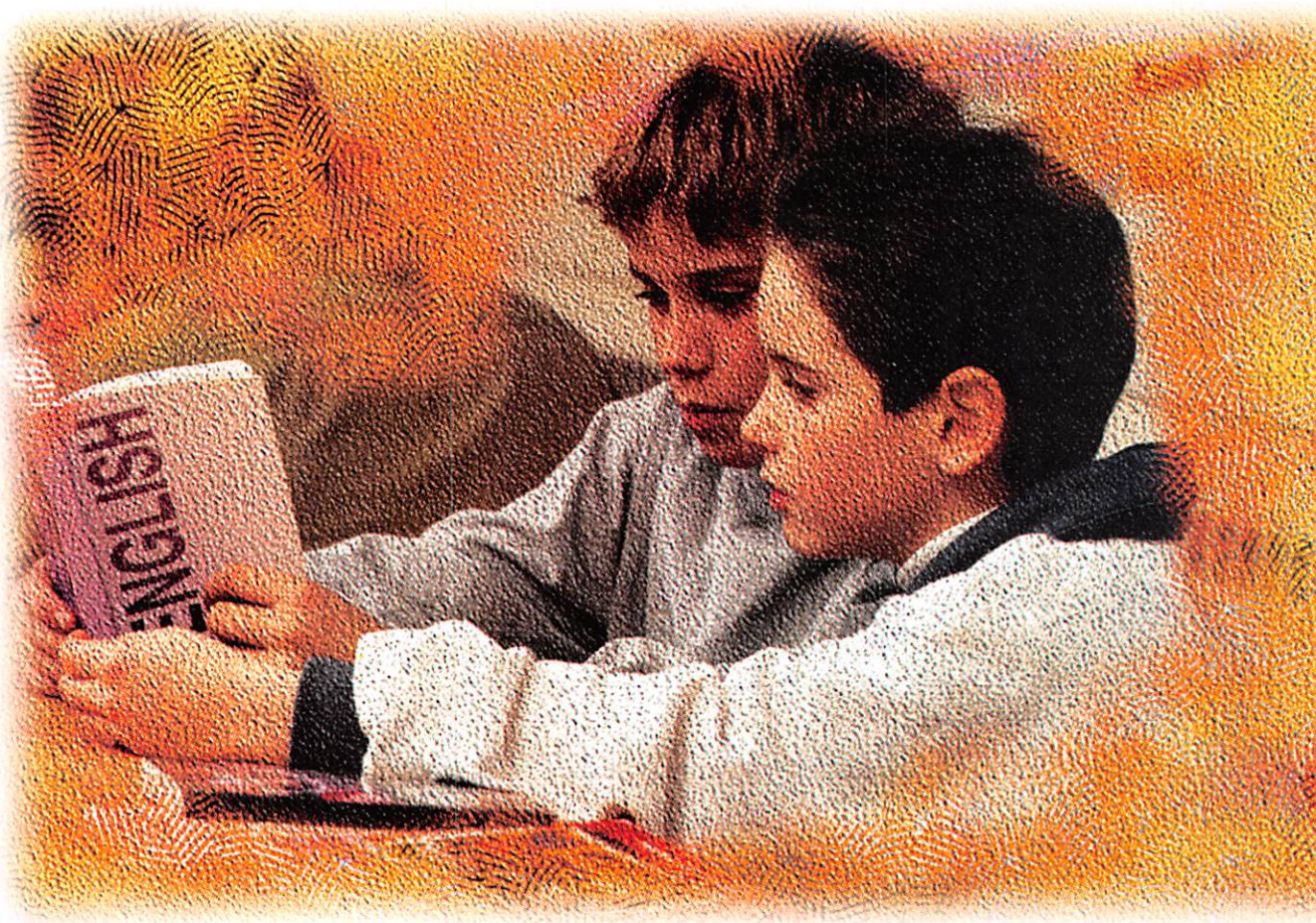
- Have the student work on **one section of an assignment** at a time. For example, use a sticky note to cover additional rows of math problems or paragraphs in a reading assignment so the student can only see the part she is working on. You can also fold worksheets into sections or even cut them apart into manageable chunks.



- If the child doesn't or can't complete an acceptable amount of school work during the week, talk to the special education teacher and the parents about "enrolling" the child in **Saturday school.** Explain that you'll send home a list of assignments that the student didn't complete, and her parents will take responsibility for making sure the child works on them over the weekend. With supportive and consistent parents, this can be very effective.
- Give the child a pizza box, an unfolded big-book box, or another divider that she can use to create a **study carrel** at her desk. You'll be surprised how much more confidently the child works when she doesn't feel like someone else is looking at her paper.

Step #4: Involving Other Students

- Kids are bound to **ask why** one child is treated differently from the others. A simple answer, such as "It's in his educational plan," may be all you need to provide. With older students you might want to **discuss** what a learning disability is, being sure to stress that having a learning disability doesn't mean the child isn't smart.
- Find a **classmate who will help** the LD child while you're working with other students. Make sure the helper knows he's supposed to guide the student, but he isn't supposed to give away the answers. If you sense your helper is tiring of his job, find a replacement before the task becomes a burden.

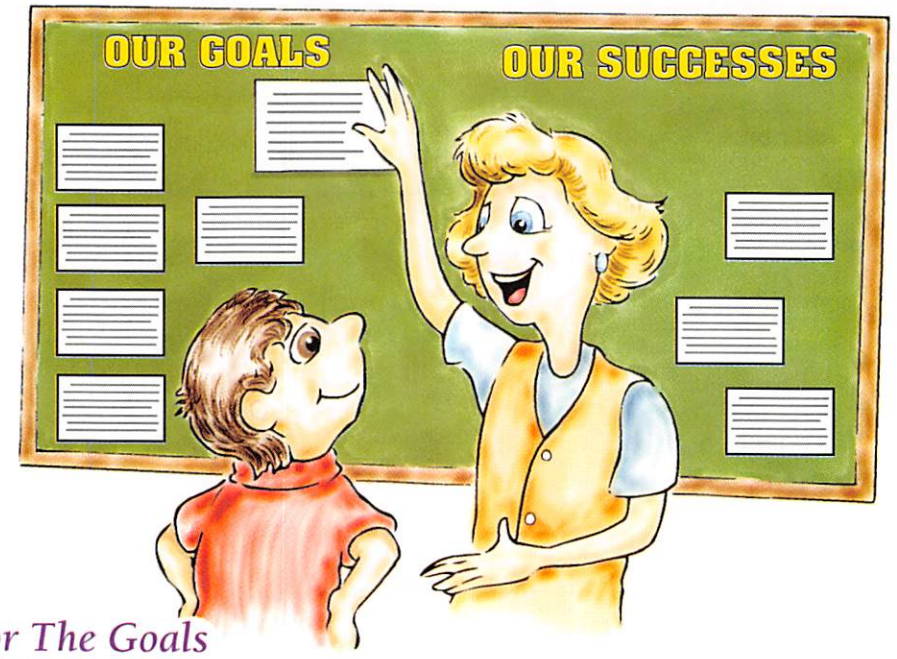


Step #5: Helping The LD Child Shine

- Ask a lower-grades teacher to invite the LD child to **read** to her students.
- Every child is **good at something.** If your LD child has good penmanship, invite her to write special announcements on the chalkboard. If she has a strong voice, ask her to lead the class in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. Find that special something the child can do well and give her a chance to shine.

Our Readers Write

About classroom tips and time-savers



Go For The Goals

To help every child grow, I give each student an official goal to work on, based on her abilities. Next I create a goal folder for each child. The folder includes activities and materials that will help the student reach her goal. We set aside time during the day to work on activities from our goal folders.

The learning doesn't end at school, though. I also make a goal placemat for each child to take home. Making the placemats is easy—I just program a large sheet of construction paper with a goal-related activity, then cover it with Con-Tact® paper. I suggest parents keep the placemats on the table so the parent and child can practice the skill at mealtime.

To show how we're progressing on our goals, I label half of a bulletin board "Our Goals" and the other half "Our Successes." I write each child's goal on a notecard and put it in the goals section. When a child achieves her goal, we move her goal card to the "Our Successes" side of the bulletin board. Then we get busy choosing a new goal for the child to pursue!

—Jean Kowalski, Lincoln Elementary, Alpena, MI

Much-Needed Getaway

Create a quiet spot in your classroom where students can take a short break when they're upset or overwhelmed. I call mine the Short-Stay Getaway. Here's what to do:

1. Obtain a cushioned, high-back rocking chair or other large, comfortable chair. Position it facing a corner of your classroom.
2. At eye level on the wall, place an exotic-looking travel poster that shows a relaxing, faraway place.
3. Make a sign with "Yes" on one side and "No" on the other. Punch a hole in the top of the sign. Then attach a small hook to the back of the chair. Hang the sign on it.
4. Brainstorm with your students what they can do when a classmate is bothering them. (You might want to invite your guidance counselor to lead this discussion.) Record the suggestions on a clipboard. Place the clipboard in your getaway area.
5. Finally, explain to your students that whenever they are upset, angry, or overwhelmed, they can visit the Short-Stay Getaway. They should "check in" by turning the sign on the chair to say "Yes," to show others that the getaway is in use. Then they'll review the list of ideas for how to handle conflicts with other students. Once they've cooled off and decided how to handle the problem, they'll check out by turning the sign back to "No" and going back to their activities.

Many students—and teachers, too—feel refreshed once they've had a quick getaway!

—Tina Bilger Vaughn, Christiansburg, VA

A caring teacher hands children their passport to the future. — Jenlane Gee

Create-A-Plate

Does your school have lots of parents picking up their children by car at the end of the day? Here's an easy way to make sure kids get to the right cars quickly and safely. Get a supply of white paper plates, one for each parent who will be picking up a child. On the back of a plate, write the child's first and last name in large, dark letters in the center. Then write the child's teacher's name across the plate's outer edge. Explain to parents that they should display the plates on their passenger-side dashboards during pick-up time. This really cuts confusion!

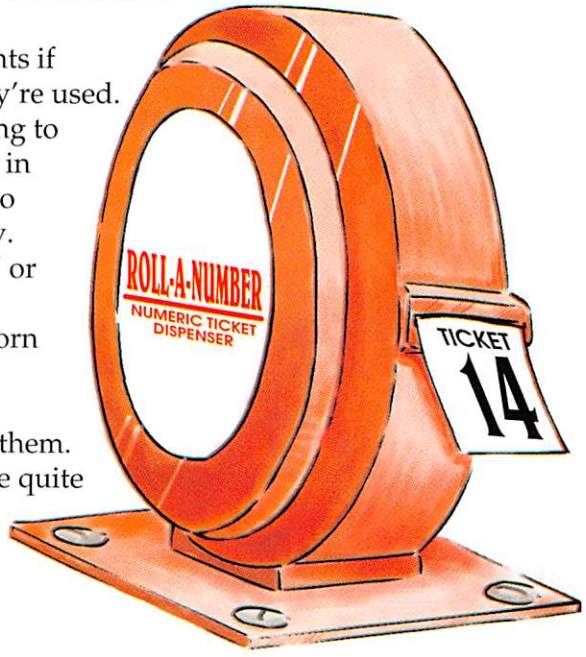
—Lynne Routzong, Western Heights Elementary, Eufaula, AL

A Number Of Ways To Help

Next time you go to the deli, take notice of the "take-a-number" machine you're likely to see there. (Usually they're red.) Here's a way to quickly get to know your students—and to keep current with them all year long—that was inspired by those machines.

1. Obtain a supply of the "take-a-number" tickets, either by making your own or asking the deli manager if you can have a ticket for each of your students.
2. Draw a replica of the machine and post it in your classroom. Put the tickets in a small plastic bag and hang it underneath.
3. Now you're ready to get your class involved. Ask your students if they've ever seen one of these machines, and discuss how they're used.
4. Next explain that periodically throughout the year you're going to give each student one of the tickets. You'll go to a cozy corner in your classroom and call students over one by one, according to their numbers, while the rest of the class works independently. When a student comes to see you, ask, "How can I help you?" or say, "Tell me what's going on in your life right now." Most children welcome the chance to share. For the child who's a born talker, you might want to ask about the three most important things that are happening to him right now.
5. As you talk with students, collect the tickets so you can reuse them. By having students take a number every month or so, you'll be quite up-to-date!

—Kimberly Minafo, Tooker Avenue Elementary School, West Babylon, NY



Save It For A Snowy Day

Create student time capsules at the start of the school year. Several months later, students will enjoy reminiscing about how far they've come. You'll need paper, pens, and a paper-towel tube for each child. Have your students write about and draw their summer activities, what they're good at, what they're hoping to learn this year, and how they think they'll change in a few months. Give each child a paper-towel tube and invite her to decorate it as a time capsule. Then have her roll up her writings and drawings and slide them inside the tube.

Store the tubes away for several months. Then, on a rainy or snowy day when your class needs to be perked up, pull out the time capsules and present them to your students. This trip back in time will lift students' spirits on even the dreariest of days!

—Amy Barsanti, Pines Elementary School, Plymouth, NC

continued ☛

Our Readers Write

Museum-Quality Exhibits

Before school starts, make a supply of labels for each student. Each label should say "Original Work By" and include the student's name, the school's name, and the year. Then, as you display student artwork and writing during the coming year, place one of these labels in the lower right-hand corner of each "exhibit." They look very professional!

—Cathy Ogg, Happy Valley Elementary, Johnson City, TN

In Great Shape!

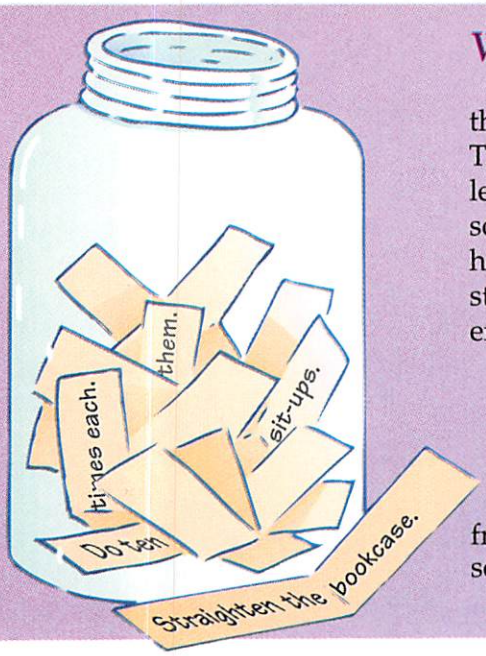
I like to use the shape charts available in teacher stores. But unfortunately my budget doesn't allow me to buy as many as I'd like to—and my artistic talents aren't such that I can draw them on my own. But I've found an easy way to create great shape charts with little fuss. All I need is a metal cookie cutter in the shape I'd like to create, an overhead projector, a pencil, and a large sheet of construction paper. First I attach the paper to a wall or bulletin board and position the overhead projector in front of it. Then I put the cookie cutter on the projector and shine the shape onto the paper. All I have to do is move the projector closer or further away to get the size I want. I trace the shape, cut it out, and voilà—it's ready to go. This technique works well for creating bulletin-board pieces, too!

—Christa Burkey, Penn View Christian Academy, Penns Creek, PA

Getting Punchy

Paper punches aren't just for making round holes anymore! These days you can find them in a variety of shapes at many stationery, craft, and discount stores. Purchase various paper punches to add a special touch to your classroom. For example, add a few heart shapes to a student's birthday card or sprinkle some stars on a student's desk to celebrate a special accomplishment. Get creative with the materials you punch shapes from—old wrapping paper and the silver or gold inner wrappers from candy bars work particularly well!

—VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE



When Tattles Sprout

Here's an easy way to weed out tattling. Discuss with your students the difference between tattling and sharing important information. Then explain that when students tattle, they're wasting important learning time. If they come to you with a tattle, they'll have to do something to make up for the time they've lost. Next, have your class help you decide what the consequences for tattling should be. Write students' suggestions on small slips of paper and put them in a clean, empty jar, which will become the tattle jar. Suggestions include:

- Write your spelling words five times each.
- Straighten the bookcase.
- Make up five math problems and solve them.
- Do ten sit-ups.

Whenever a child comes to you with a tattle, send him to pick a slip from the tattle jar. Soon students will understand that learning is serious business and that tattles don't take root in your classroom!

—Anne Elliott, Pierce Elementary School, Fort Knox, KY

Modeling isn't the best way to teach. It is the only way to teach.

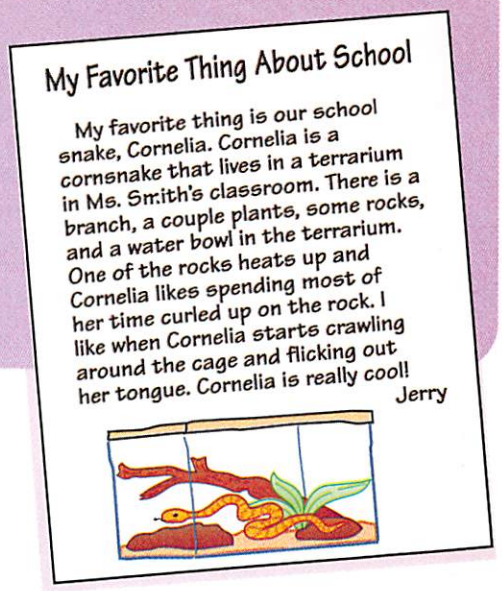
A Few Of Our Favorite Things

At the beginning of the school year, get your students thinking about their favorite school-related things and, at the same time, create a class book to welcome students who join the class later. Here's what to do:

1. Tell students that the class is going to create a book called "A Few Of Our Favorite Things." Each child will develop one page showing one of his or her favorite things about school. For example, one child might write about the library and its many new books and another child might write about a favorite ice-cream flavor available in the cafeteria. Have students sign up for topics to avoid duplication.
2. Once students have finished their pages, make copies so you have the original copy for visitors to enjoy and several black-and-white copies to present to new students who join the class during the year. Add covers and bind the copies into finished books.

You'll find that classroom visitors and new students respond enthusiastically to these books. In fact, you might want to include a few blank pages so they can add information about their favorite things!

—Barbara Samuels, Riverview School, Denville, NJ


My Favorite Thing About School

My favorite thing is our school snake, Cornelia. Cornelia is a cornsnake that lives in a terrarium in Ms. Smith's classroom. There is a branch, a couple plants, some rocks, and a water bowl in the terrarium. One of the rocks heats up and Cornelia likes spending most of her time curled up on the rock. I like when Cornelia starts crawling around the cage and flicking out her tongue. Cornelia is really cool!

Jerry

Bulletin Boards That Are Out Of This Universe!

Here's an easy way to create a bulletin board showing the universe or space: Cover your bulletin board with dark blue or black construction paper. Fill a clean spray bottle with a small amount of bleach. Lightly spray the paper with the bleach. Of course you'll want to protect any nearby items, the floor, and your clothes while using the bleach. Once dry, your board will look heavenly!

—VaReane Gray Heese, Springfield Elementary, Springfield, NE

Drawing Out The Shy Child

Students love to trade desks with the teacher for a day. However, I don't decide whom to trade with randomly. Instead, early in the year I trade desks with a student who sits beside a shy member of our class. That way, I get to visit and work with the shy child in an unobtrusive way. Plus, the child sitting at my desk has a great time, too!

—Rosemary Linden, Royal Valley Elementary, Topeka, KS

Quick Cheer-Up

Before the school year (and the flu season!) gets in full swing, create a supply of clever get-well cards to send to students when they are out sick. Try this:

1. Fold a piece of white paper into a card shape. On the front of the card, draw a stick person with a large head, a sad face, and a bump on his head.
2. Photocopy a supply of these cards on bright, cheery paper.
3. Stick a real bandage on the stick person's bump. Fold the cards. When you need one, all you'll have to do is write a get-well message inside.

My students love these cards!

—Miosotis Peña, McAuliffe School, Lowell, MA

—Albert Schweitzer

Grin & Share It

Glimpses into the lighter side of teaching

The "Shear" Joy Of Learning

My students had been studying Japan. So when Jack came to school one morning and bowed to me, I responded by greeting him in Japanese. He looked confused for a second, then said, "No, Ms. Feffer, look, I got a haircut!"

—Marsha Feffer, Bentley Early Childhood Center, Salem, MA

The Naked Truth

Year after year my kindergartners remind me how much they have to learn about the basics of school. For example, one year I decided to take my new class outside so they could try out the playground equipment without the bigger kids around. After a few minutes, I noticed some of my former students waving at me from the window. Happily, I waved back. Then they started laughing and pointing. Confused, I looked around. There was Joseph—running around the playground completely naked! I rushed over to him. "Joseph, why did you take your clothes off?" I asked. Innocently he replied, "My mom said not to get them dirty!"

—Trish Draper, Turner Valley, Alberta, Canada

Quotable Kids!

- I'd spent several days teaching my students about the parts of a friendly letter, and I was ready to see what they'd learned. I began quizzing the class about letters. "How do you close a letter?" I asked. Amanda replied, "You lick it!"

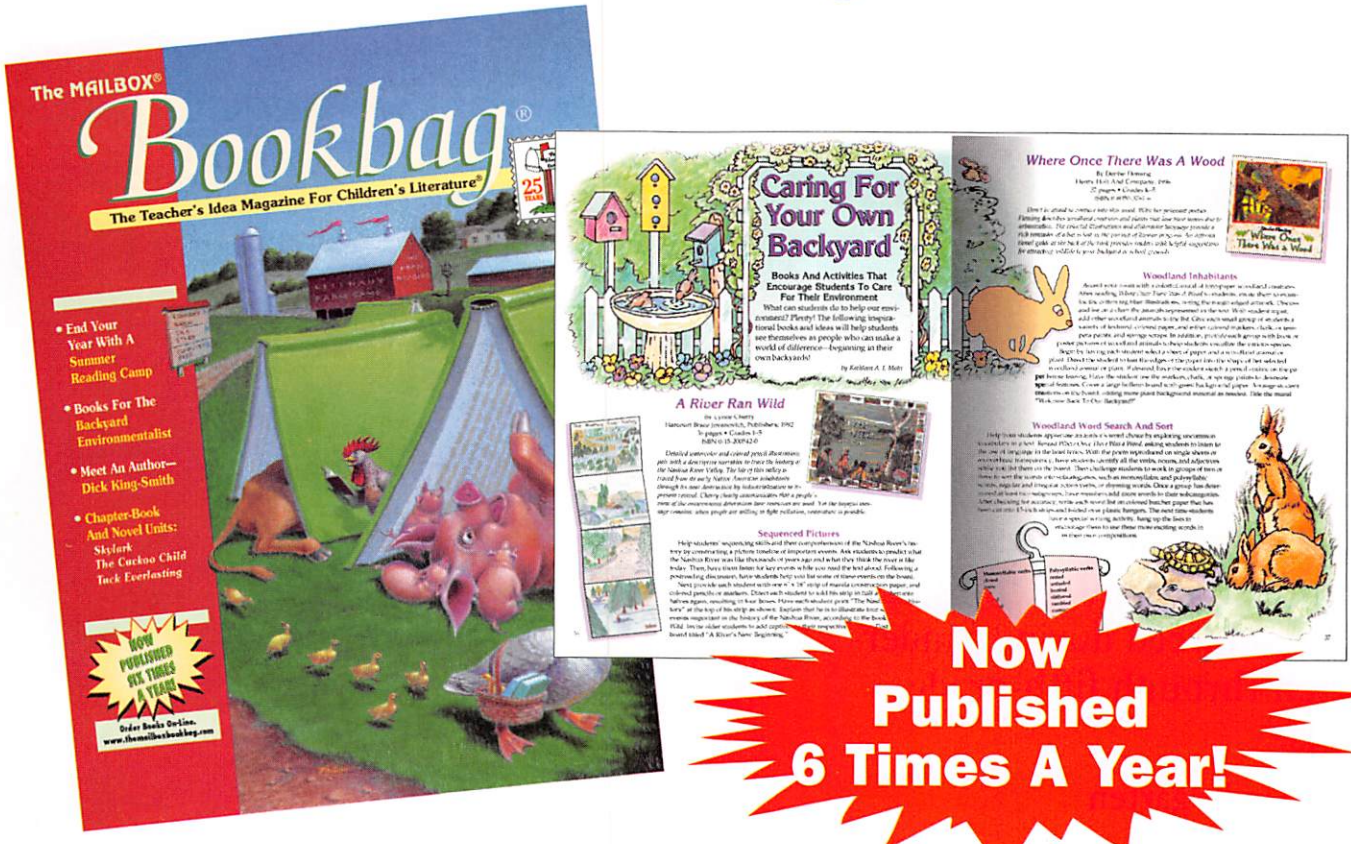
  —Phyllis Bowling, Smithville Elementary, Smithville, MS

- A new student and her mother arrived for a tour of our school. When I greeted them I said, "Hi, I'm Paula." "Oh," the child replied, confused. "That's what my grandma calls her living room."

  —Paula Malionek, The House Of Seven Gables Preschool, Salem, MA

Every September is like Christmas, and every student, a surprise gift to open.—Mary Vissilikou Bicouvaris

If You Love Children's Literature… This Is The Magazine For You!


The MAILBOX®
Bookbag®
The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®
• End Your Year With A Summer Reading Camp
• Books For The Backyard Environmentalist
• Meet An Author—Dick King-Smith
• Chapter-Book And Novel Units: Skylark The Cuckoo Child Tuck Everlasting
NOW PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR!
Order Books On-Line. www.themailboxbookbag.com
Caring For Your Own Backyard
Books And Activities That Encourage Students To Care For Their Environment
A River Ran Wild
Where Once There Was A Wood
Woodland Inhabitants
Woodland Word Search And Sort
Sequenced Pictures

Now Published 6 Times A Year!

Teacher-Tested Ideas And Activities

- Six times a year means more teacher-tested ideas and children's literature units when you need them.
- Enrich all areas of your curriculum with inspiring, fun-filled thematic units and ideas from our nationwide network of teachers.
- Practical, ready-to-use activities to integrate classics, award winners, and newer books into your curriculum.
- Published by the editors of America's most popular teaching magazine, *The Mailbox*®. For grades 1–5.

The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®

The MAILBOX®
Bookbag®
The Teacher's Idea Magazine For Children's Literature®

Order *The Mailbox*® *BOOKBAG*® Today! $29.95 for 6 issues
Call Toll-Free 1-800-627-8579. Mon.–Fri. 8 A.M.–11 P.M. ET

All non-U.S. subscriptions please add $9.00 postage & handling in U.S. funds. *The Mailbox*® *BOOKBAG*® is published 6 times a year.
Please allow 6–8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.
Visit our Web site: www.themailboxbookbag.com or email: themailboxbookbag@theeducationcenter.com

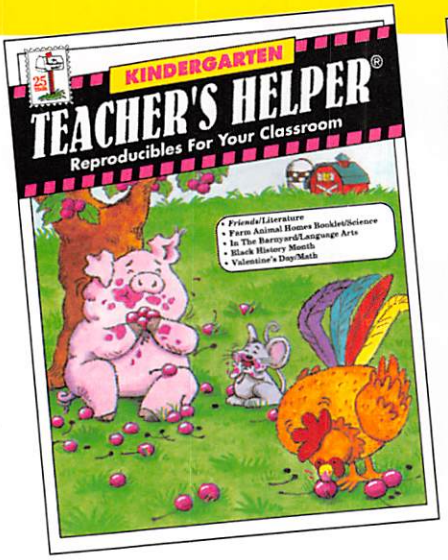
The Education Center®

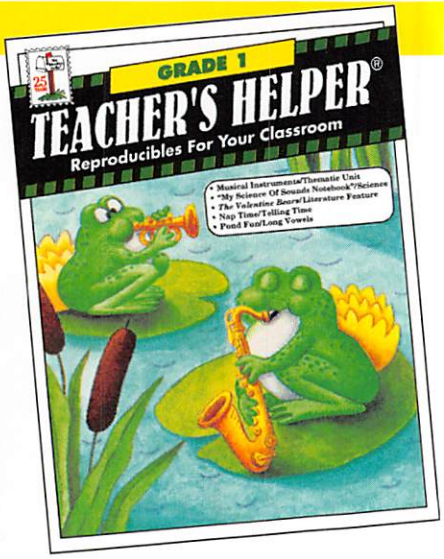
From Your Friends At *The Mailbox*®

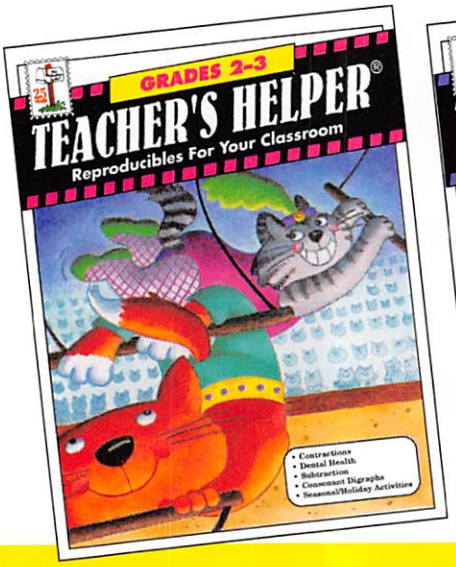
Skill-Based Reproducibles That Make Learning Fun!

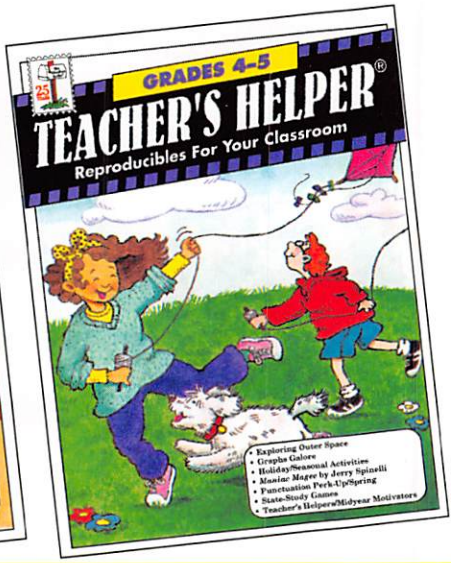
TEACHER'S HELPER®

- **SAVES YOU TIME:** Units are perforated and ready to use with background information and extension activities.
- **FITS YOUR LESSON PLAN:** Teacher-tested reproducibles feature skills and themes taught and reinforced during kindergarten through fifth-grade levels:
  - Kindergarten
  - Grade 1
  - Grades 2–3
  - Grades 4–5
- **MOTIVATES YOUR STUDENTS:** More than traditional worksheets, these interesting activities and clever themes make learning fun—the proven way to motivate students.









To order, return the postage-paid reply card or call our toll-free number listed below.
4 issues for $16.95. 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed.

Subscribe Today! • 4 issues for $16.95 • 1-800-627-8579 MON.–FRI. 8 A.M.–11 P.M. ET

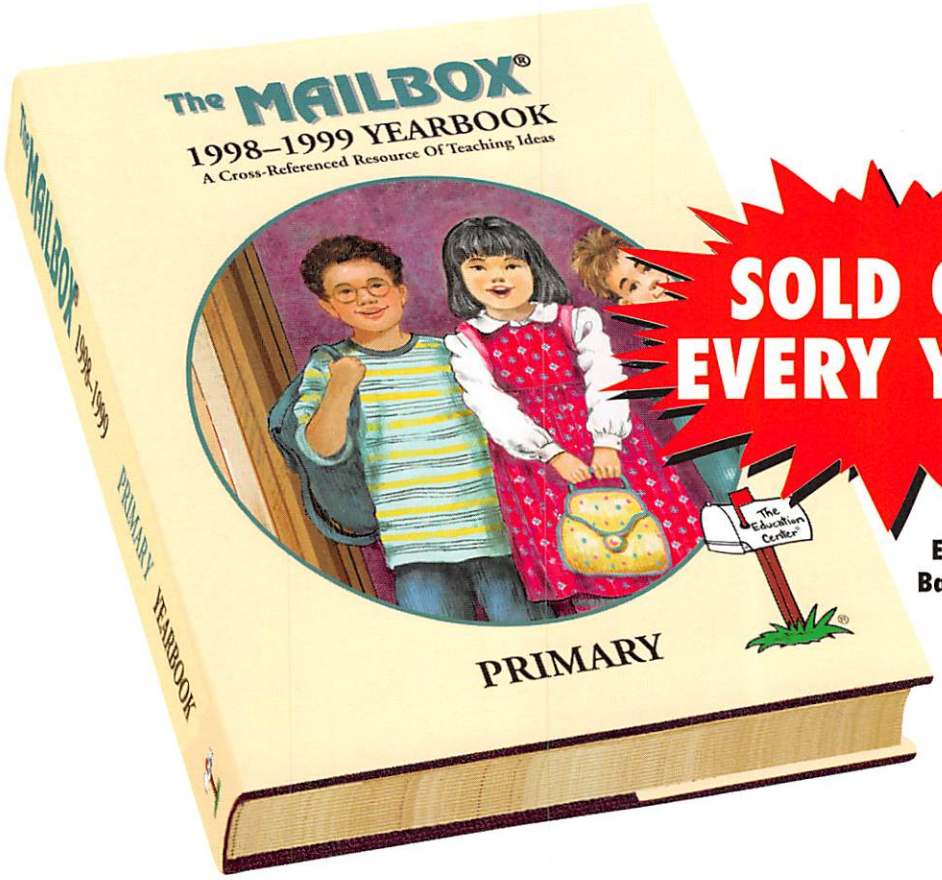
Visit Us On The World Wide Web: www.teachershelper.com

All non-U.S. subscriptions, please add $6.00 postage & handling in U.S. funds. Please allow 8–10 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

4LAF

The MAILBOX® YEARBOOK

A Year's Worth Of Activities At Your Fingertips!



SOLD OUT EVERY YEAR!

Expected Delivery Back-To-School 1999

- Over 300 pages—a full school year of innovative ideas from the August/September 1998 to the June/July 1999 issues of *THE MAILBOX®* magazine all in one place!
- Extensive index—cross-referenced by theme, author, book title, skill, season, and more
- Available in four grade levels—Preschool, Kindergarten, Primary, and Intermediate
- Permanent hardcover reference book
- No risk. No obligation. 100% satisfaction guaranteed!

A cross-referenced resource of America's #1 Teacher Magazine you cannot afford to be without

***The MAILBOX®* 1998–1999 Yearbook**

$29.95 plus shipping and handling

LKAE

Visit our Web site:
·www.themailboxteacber.com

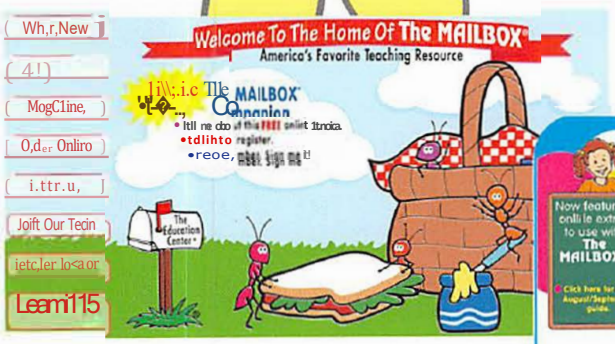
There's Never Been A Better Time To Subscribe To TheMfilLBOX®

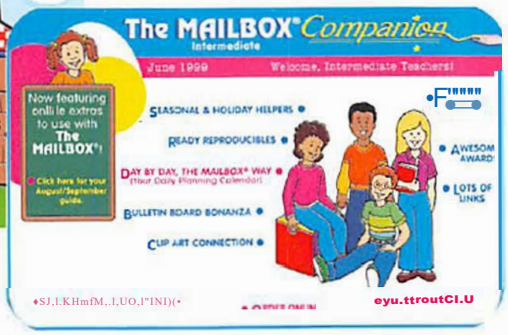
America's #1 Teacher Magazine

- Creative teaching ideas and activities to use in your classroom
- Educationally sound and appropriate activities to challenge and motivate your students
- Ideas that work for today's teachers

NOW! INCLUDED FREE WITH YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!

The NfllBOX & Coff112lp nl





Subscribe to *The MAILBOX* magazine and you'll not only get great classroom ideas, you'll gain online access to *The MAILBOX* Companion to help you put them into action. For subscribers only, *The MAILBOX* Companion gives you the ability to download ideas not published in *The MAILBOX.* Get more out of your subscription than ever before! For faster access. subscribe online or coll 1-800-627-8579 to pay by credit cord. And *The MAILBOX* Companion is just a hop, skip, and a click away!

Order Today & Enjoy All **The MAILBOX** Has To Offer!

1-800-627-8579 • Monday-Friday 8 AM.-II P.1tL ET • S24.95 for 6 issues

Subscribe at www.themailbox.com and sign up fOr The MAILBOX® companion

4LAF

All non-U.S. ubscriptions, plcilsc add S9.00 postage ilncl h,rndling in U.S. funds. Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of your l"irst issue.